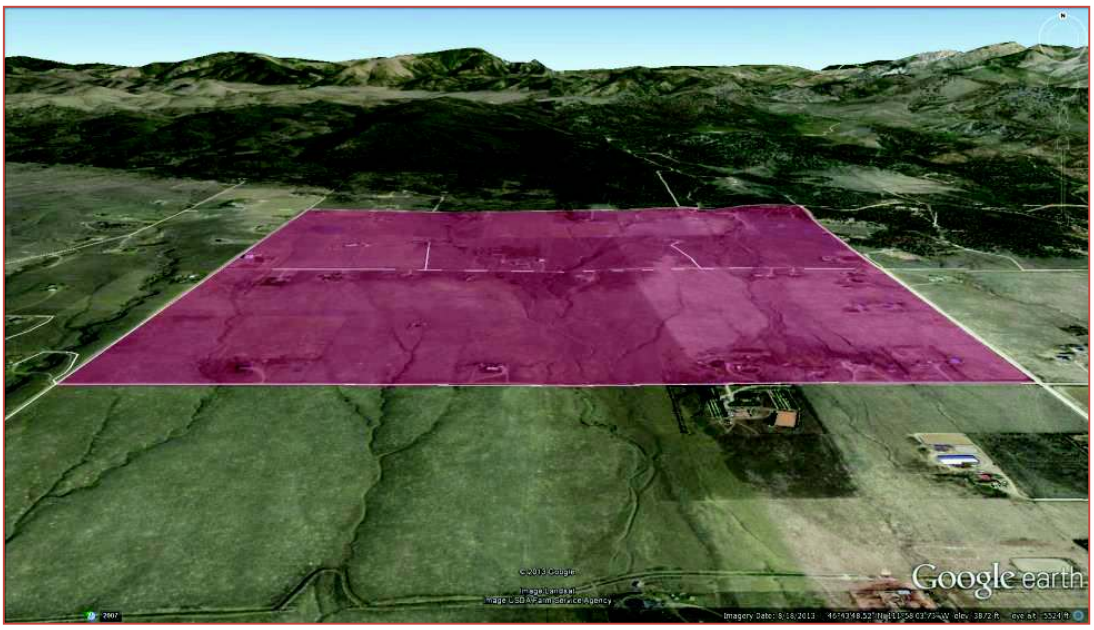
VALLEY VIEW HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN& DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

1. EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS
2. BUILDOUT ANALYSIS
3. GROWTH POLICY CONSISTENCY
4. PUBLIC INPUT
5. RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN



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PLANNING AREA

Location

The Valley View Heights neighborhood is located in Lewis and Clark County, Montana roughly 10 miles north of the Lewis and Clark County Courthouse in Helena (Figure 1).

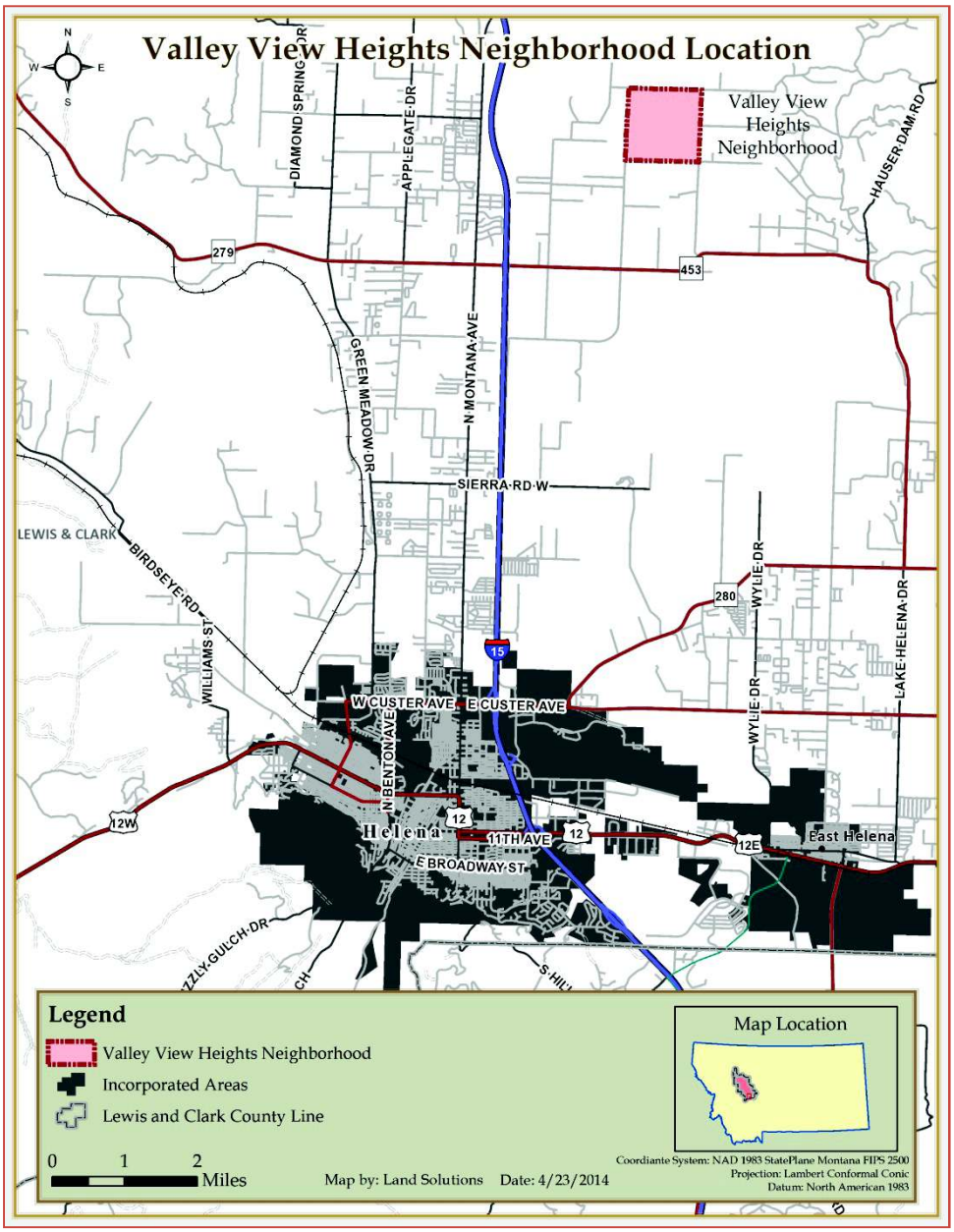


Figure 1: Location of Valley View Heights Neighborhood in relation to Helena, MT

Planning Area Boundaries

The Lewis and Clark County Commission established the neighborhood plan boundaries (planning area) for this neighborhood plan on January 28, 2014. The planning area is approximately 643 acres in size, and bounded by Snowdrift Road to the north, Ferry Drive to the east, Fantasy Road to the south and Collins Drive to the west (Figure 2).

The planning area can be described as all lands, public and private, within the southern half of Section 3, and the northern half of Section 10, Township 11 North, Range 3 West, PMM Lewis and Clark County, Montana.

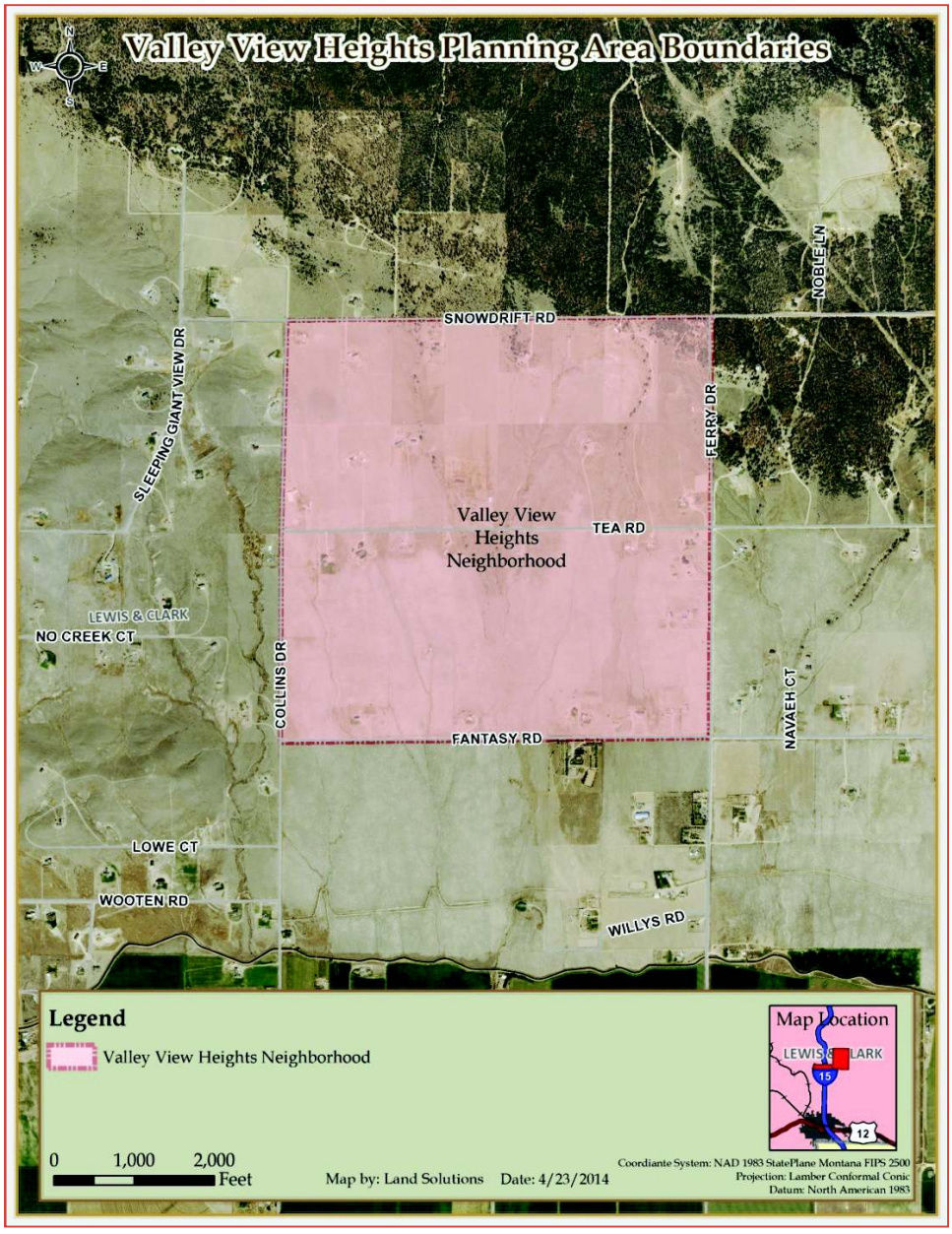


Figure 2: The Valley View Heights Neighborhood Plan boundary

PHYSICAL SETTINGS

Natural Environment

Area Description

The Valley View Heights neighborhood sits on the grassy south face of the North Hills, a recognizable physical feature that defines the northern extent of the Helena Valley (Figure 3). Above the neighborhood, in the broken ridges of the North Hills, is a ponderosa pine forest interspersed with private and public lands. To the south is irrigated pasture and farmlands, the water supplied by ditches traveling across the valley from the Missouri River. Lake Helena, an artificial water body created by Hauser Dam on the Missouri, is just south of the planning area.

To the east and west the setting is similar. The sediments carried from the North Hills bedrock create a low angled slope broken by occasional ravines and gullies. The Missouri River is about four air miles to the east. West of the planning area, a small creek called Silver Creek disappears into the gravels of the Helena Valley.

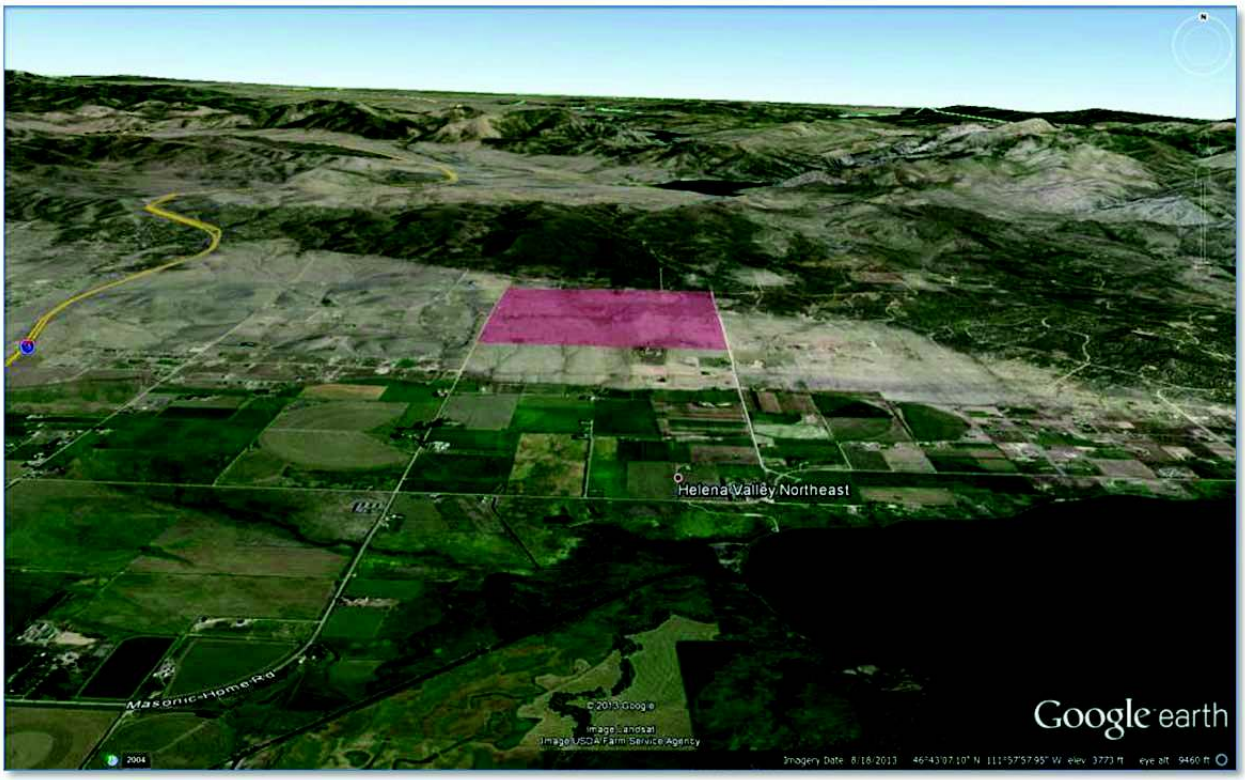


Figure 3: A Google Earth view of the planning area (in pink) and surrounding area

Climate

The climate within the planning area is similar to other areas of the Helena Valley. The region is semi-arid, characterized by low precipitation, mild summers and cold winters. Elevation has a noticeable effect on the amount of precipitation received each year, with higher elevations receiving greater amounts than the rain shadowed valleys. An official weather station is not located within the planning area, but the climate is likely similar to the weather station at Helena.

Geology and Soils

The planning area sits on a slight slope of the south face of the North Hills (Figure 4). This gentle slope is on a Colluvium bed of loose unconsolidated sediments, overlying tertiary sediments and argillite bedrock. A subsurface fault, generally running northwest to southeast, cuts across the northern edge of the planning area. The geology has a direct relationship with the susceptibility to pollution and the productivity of the underlying aquifer, the primary source of the area's drinking water.

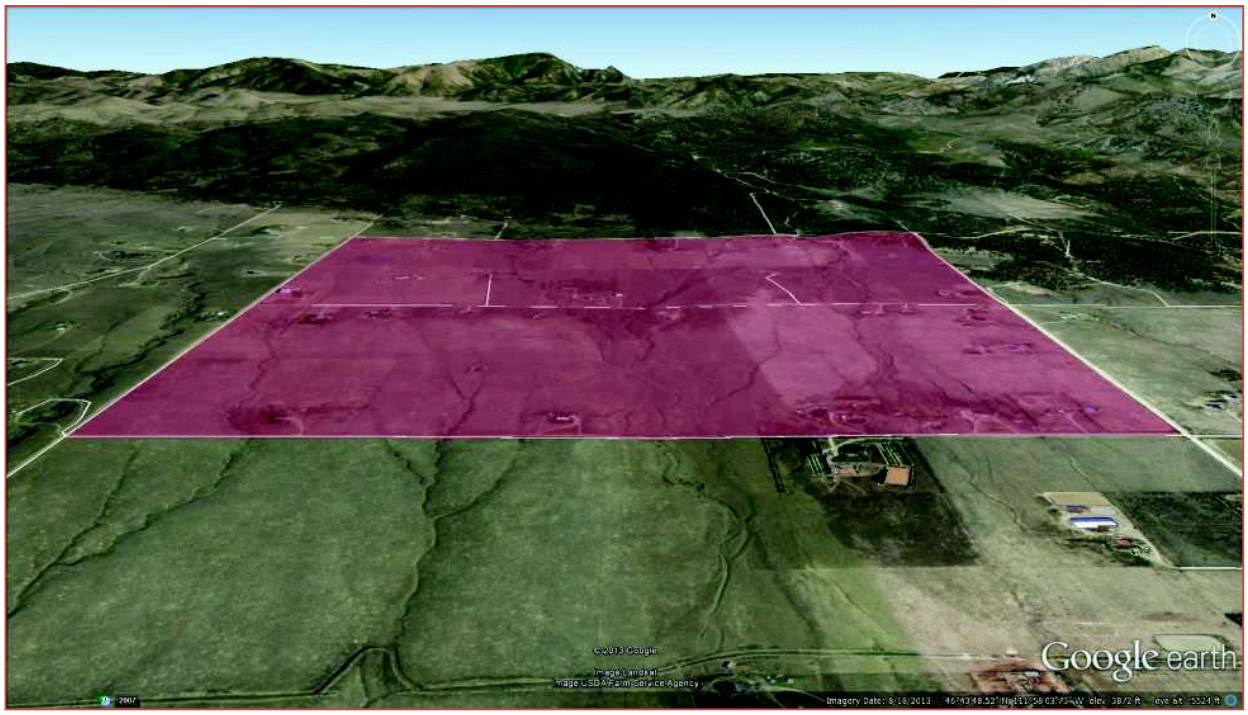


Figure 4: A Google Earth view of the topography of the planning area

Water Quantity

Water is available in the planning area in two forms; surface water and groundwater. Surface water is limited. Sourced from rain and snow melt, surface water is only available during brief periods of time depending upon the weather. Any surface water in the planning area is either transported south towards Lake Helena through a series of natural gullies, or along north-south roadside ditches where it is absorbed into the ground or it evaporates. The availability of surface water influences the vegetation types and terrain within the planning area, but is not a reliable source of water for typical residential or commercial use.

Ground water is the more plentiful and reliable source of water in the planning area. Extensive study of the ground water aquifers has been conducted in the North Valley, including the planning area.[1]

Geology is the greatest influence on the aquifers within the planning area. The northern higher end of the planning area is fractured argillite bedrock including a fault zone. The aquifer in the higher northern end of the planning area is considered a bedrock aquifer. Water in the bedrock aquifer is present in and is transported through fractures in the rock. The fault also influences the water flow direction and depth.

Traveling south and downhill, colluvium is embedded on top of tertiary sediments with pockets of sand and clay. Water is found within pockets in the sediments. The vast majority of the planning area is over tertiary aquifer. Water quantity is variable in both bedrock and tertiary aquifers. A recent study in the Scratchgravel Hills found a density of one unit per ten acres did not affect the water table in the tertiary and bedrock aquifers, but densities of one unit per acre or greater would negatively affect the aquifers.

In a heavily populated area west of I-15, also in tertiary aquifer, the number of wells drilled and drawing from the aquifer has caused a drawdown of the water table level. This means water is being extracted faster than it is being recharged. As the water level drops, wells previously reaching down into the aquifer are left above the aquifer's surface and become dry. Re-drilling a well deeper or drilling a new well becomes necessary at great expense to the well owner. The aquifers in this area of drawdown likely function in the same way as the aquifers in the planning area. Too many wells within or around the planning area could cause water levels to drop, potentially at great expense to existing well owners.

In another area of the Helena Valley also with tertiary aquifers, a single subdivision is causing groundwater levels to drop and wells to go dry. The Emerald Ridge Subdivision, located to the southeast of the Valley View Heights Planning Area, is in an area were the tertiary aquifers recharge very slowly if at all. Water levels in some of the wells in the Emerald Ridge Subdivision have dropped an average of 10 feet per year.[2]

Water Quality

The North Hills aquifer study also includes a discussion of water quality. The authors looked for signs of pollution and potential sources of pollutants. Many factors impact water quality in an aquifer and human activity can have a substantial influence. Pollutants from fertilizers, accidental spills and leaking storage tanks among other factors all can enter the aquifer and pollute the water. Septic systems are a potential source of groundwater pollution. As the effluent sinks into the soil, natural processes typically break down many of the organic compounds, essentially purifying the water. However, in gravelly soils or bedrock areas, such as within the planning area, this process is not as effective and the potential for pollution increases. Accord-

[1] Waren, Bobst, Swierc and Madson. *Hydrogeologic Investigation of the North Hills Study Area, Lewis and Clark County, Montana, Interpretive Report*. Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Groundwater Investigation Program. January, 2012.
[2] Swierc, James E. *Emerald Ridge Area Ground Water Resource Assessment.* Lewis and Clark Water Quality Protection District. March 2014.

ing to the North Hills study, effluent is currently having a limited impact on the aquifers in and around the planning area, but there is a potential that water quality can be impacted by contamination from septic systems, particularly if higher densities of septic systems are built.

Air

It is not uncommon in mountain valleys in Montana for inversions to set in and air quality issues to arise. Helena Valley is prone to this phenomenon. The planning area is within the Air Pollution Control District and subject to the Lewis and Clark County Outdoor Air Quality Regulations. These regulations mainly effect burning and heating with wood. Dust is also a common air pollutant. The roads in the planning area are all gravel, and the more traffic on the roads, the more dust that is generated from those roads.

Environmental Risks

The planning area is not without environmental risks. The primary concerns are from wildland fire and earthquakes.

Wildland Fire

How to live with wildland fire is something most people in rural areas of western Montana need to be aware of. According to the 2004 Growth Policy the planning area is not designated as having a 'high' or 'high to severe' wildfire risk rating with the exception of one corner. This does not mean the area is not at risk of wildland fire. For example, in 2012 a wildland fire tore through the Scratchgravel Hills, prompting evacuations and causing property damage. The fire affected areas that were not designated as high or severe. Much of the planning area is grassland, which tends to be a fuel type with very high rates of flame spread, especially when wind driven.

Earthquakes

The Helena Valley is the site of the second largest recorded earthquake in the State of Montana and is considered to be at risk for another sizeable event. There is a potentially active geologic fault that runs northwest to southeast in close proximity to the northeast corner of the study area. The study area does not include land that is susceptible to soil and substrate liquefaction during earthquakes.

Wildlife

According to a map of habitat types in the Helena Valley published in 2000, the prevalent habitat type in the planning area is grassland, with a small portion of the planning area being Ponderosa pine (Figure 5).

The Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Crucial Area Planning System (CAPS) is an online system generalizing the potential for wildlife and wildlife habitat throughout Montana. According to a review of the CAPS ranking system, there is potential for wildlife in the planning area. The system rates each one-mile section on a class scale, typically 1 through 4, with Class 1 representing the highest quality and Class 4 representing the lowest quality for wildlife resources. The system considers a number of different resources.

Figure 5: Habitat types within the planning area

The system ranks part of the planning area as high as Class 2 for terrestrial conservation species. This refers to the cumulative expected occurrence of 85 of Montana's vertebrate species. In other words, according to CAPS, there is a relatively high potential for a number of Montana's vertebrate species to at least visit the area. The terrestrial species richness, which is a way to measure the overall number of species that are associated with an area, ranks part of the planning area as Class 1, the highest class for terrestrial species richness.

According to CAPS, the planning area is high value for big game winter range habitat. Species considered include elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, antelope and moose, although not all of these species are likely present. In general, the portion of the planning area with a higher wildlife value is the northern half, likely because of the edge between the two habitat types. Observed wildlife sighting may differ from the classifications of CAPS. For more information on CAPS, please visit http://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/caps/.

Human Environment

Area Description

The North Hills is not only a geographic feature north of Helena; it is also a place people identify as a neighborhood or community. In Helena, you can ask someone where they live, and if they respond, "I live in the North Hills," you understand where that is and what that looks like. There are thousands of homes, miles of roads, businesses, schools, fire stations and a highway interchange. There are rural areas, suburban neighborhoods, and undeveloped expanses.

Generally speaking, the greatest densities in the vicinity of the planning area are west of the Interstate and north of Lincoln Road (Figure 6). The area immediately surrounding the planning area is considered rural. The land use pattern is mostly larger lot (10–40 acres), rural residential, with some agriculture to the south (Figure 7). Estates, horse properties and hobby farms are common, while commercial uses are rare. The infrastructure in the immediate area around the planning area is typical of rural areas. Roads are primarily in a grid pattern following section lines or topography. The quality of the roads is generally substandard, typically below optimal widths and not constructed with proper crown or aggregate base. Power and telephone lines are mostly overhead; in some areas lines are buried. An electrical transmission line cuts northwest to southeast just north of the planning area and a second one is located along Ferry Drive north to Tea Road. Natural gas is generally not available. There are no sidewalks, bike paths, parks or other public facilities typical of urban or suburban areas.

There is public land in the vicinity of the planning area (Figure 8). A Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks facility is located just south of the planning area on Lake Helena. Bureau of Land Management and Montana State School Trust Lands are located just to the north. Hauser Lake is close by where a number of recreational opportunities can be found.

South of the planning area is the Lincoln Road East Zoning District (Figure 9). The district allows for the creation of parcels as small as 5 acres and 10 acres depending upon location. The two zoning designations are called SAG-5 and SAG-10 (Suburban Agriculture). The primary intent of this district is to preserve and protect the uses of single-family dwelling units and to promote a suburban agricultural character.

The planning area is only nine miles from the Custer Avenue exchange in Helena and all of the City's amenities. It is convenient to live in the planning area and work in Downtown Helena. The North Hills, including the planning area, can be considered a bedroom community of Helena.

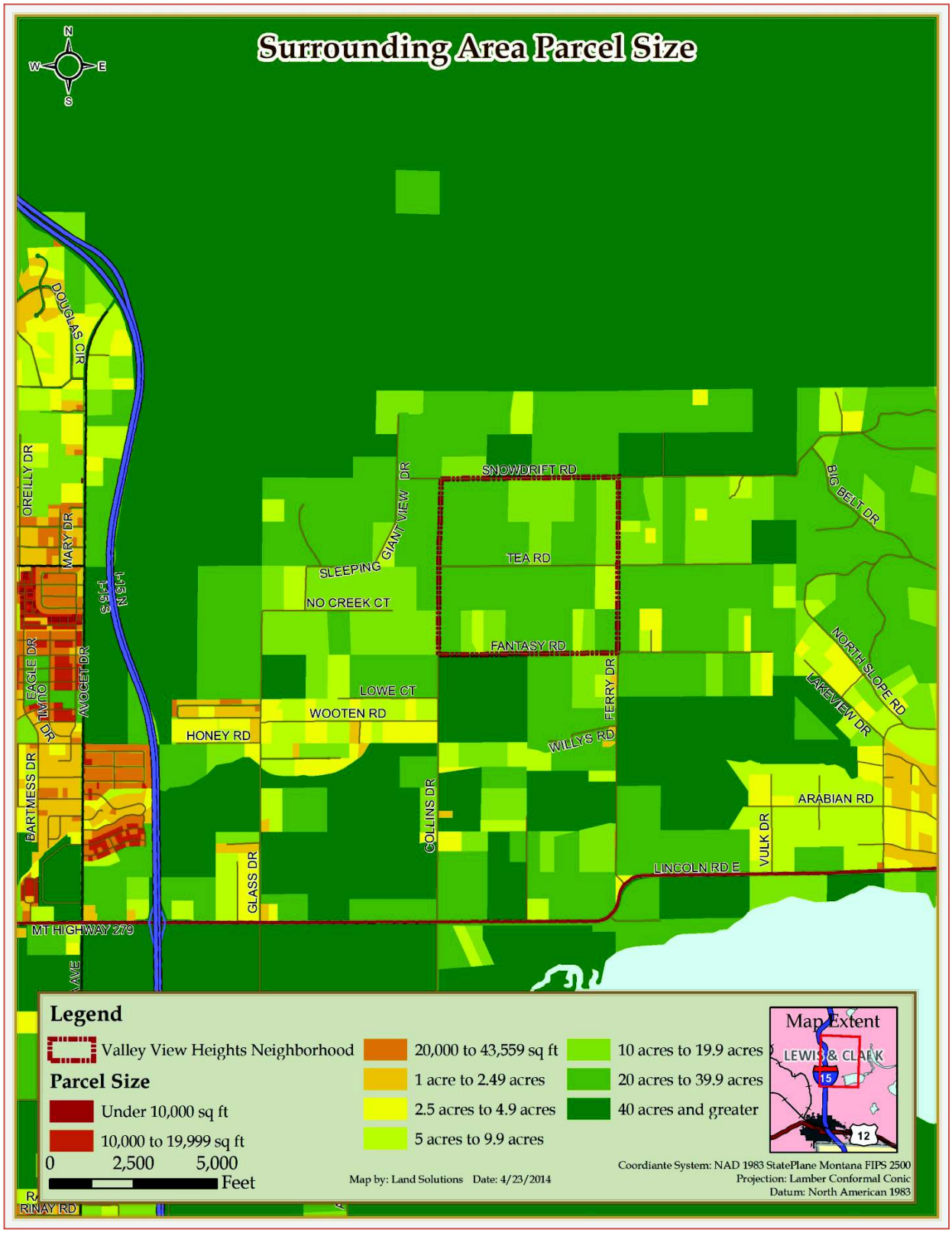


Figure 6: Parcel size in and around the planning area

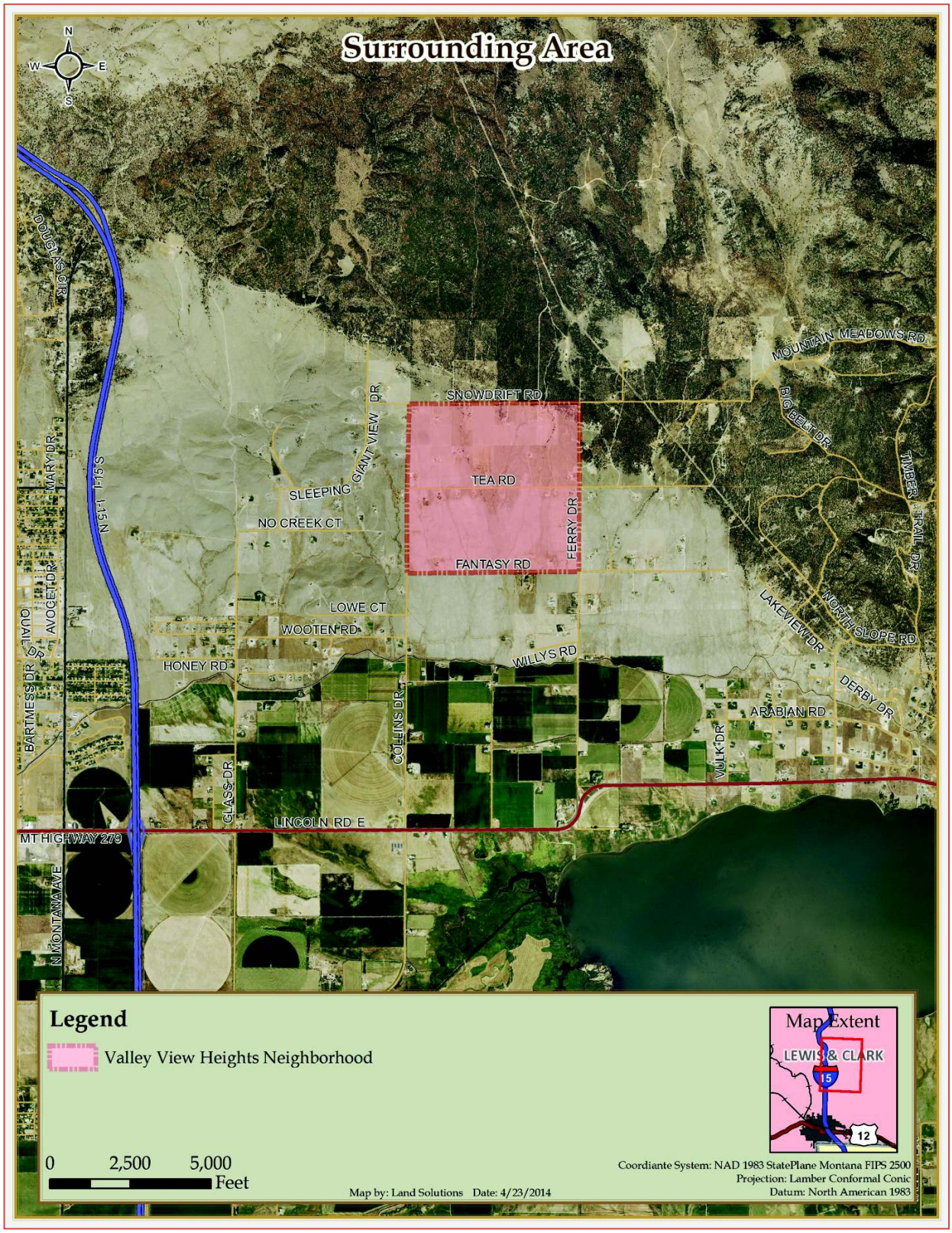


Figure 7: Aerial view of the surrounding area

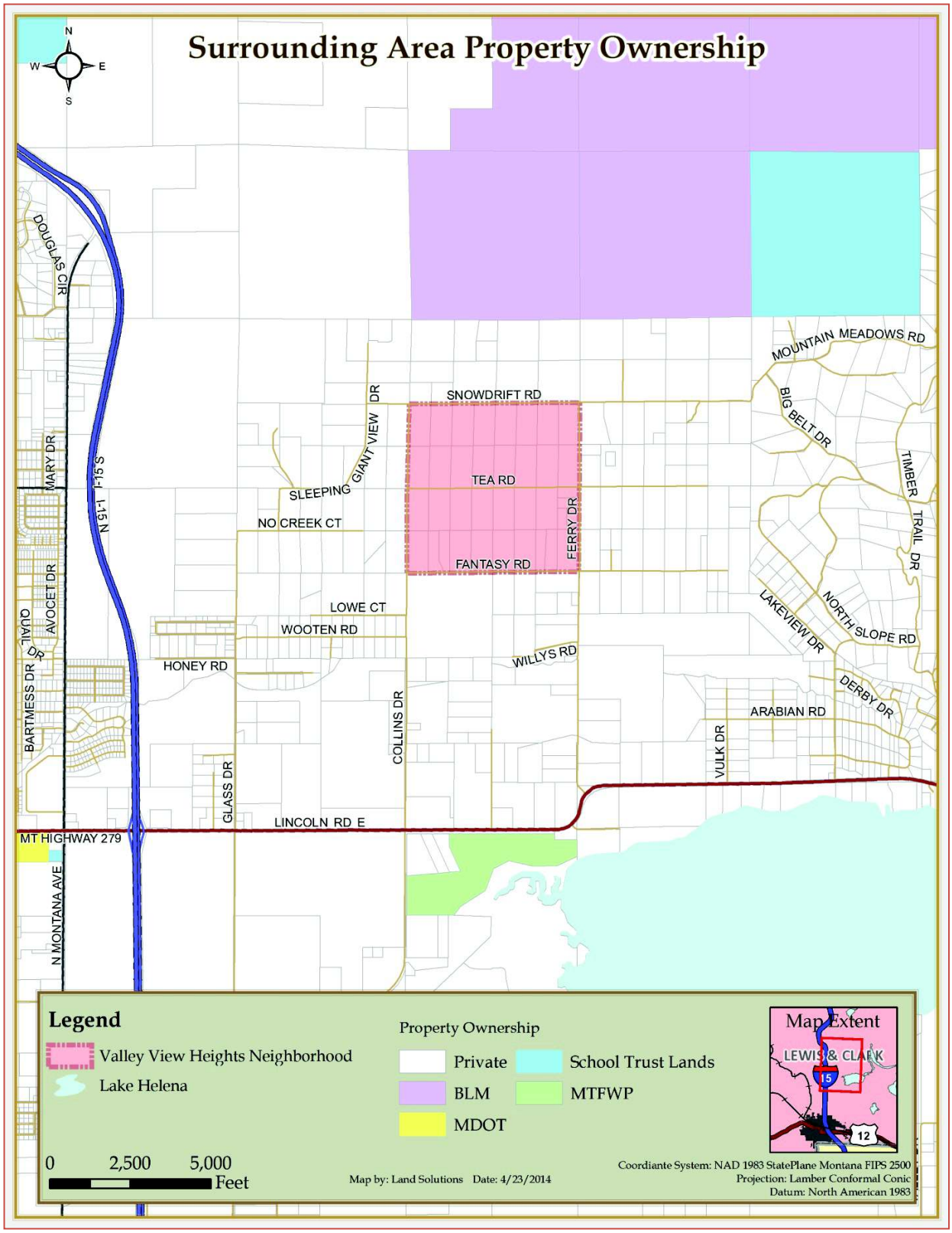


Figure 8: Property ownership in the surrounding area

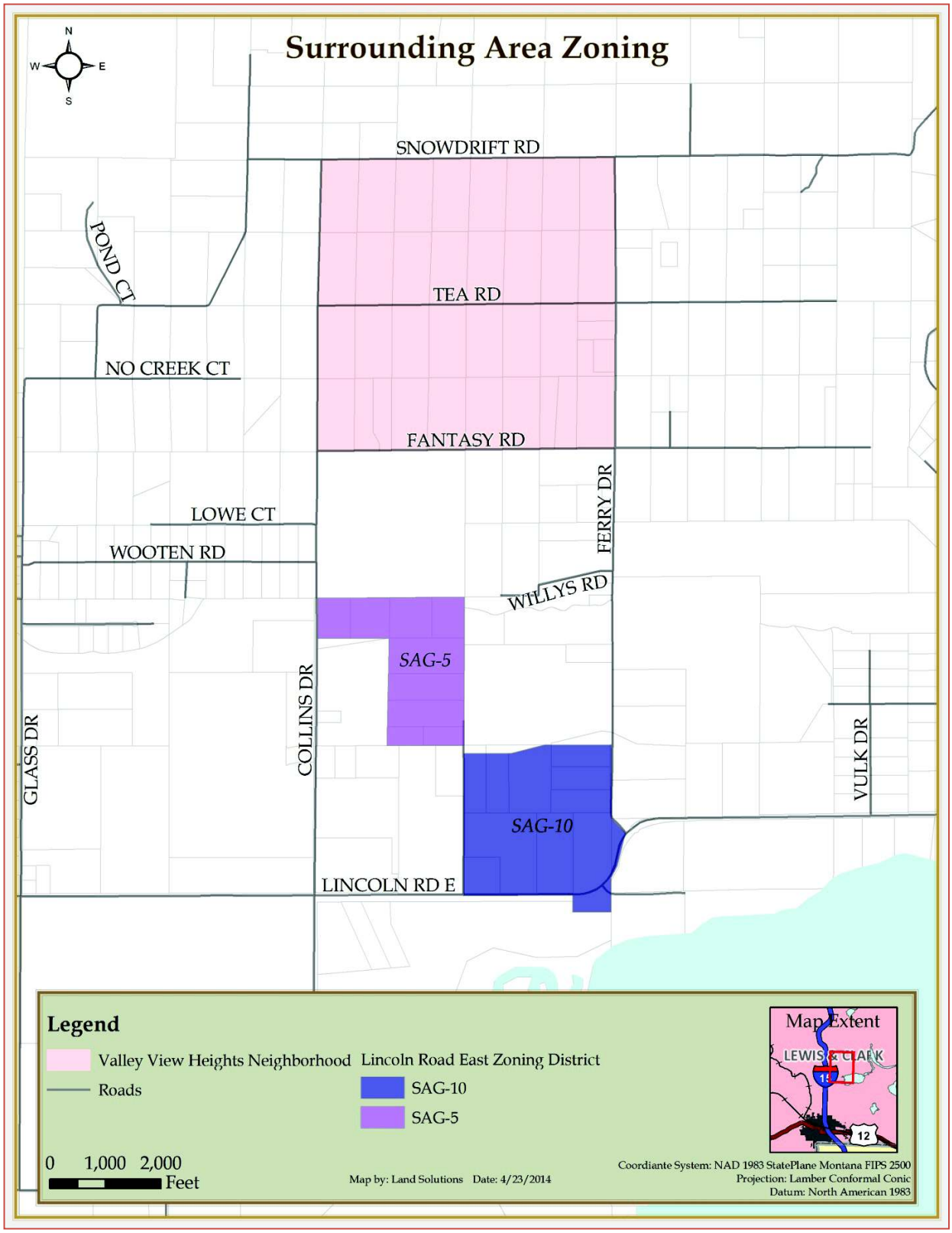


Figure 9: Zoning in the vicinity of the planning area

Transportation

Road Network

A network of roads serves the planning area; no other transportation infrastructure is available. All of the roads within and accessing the planning area are County or public gravel roads. The road network is a classic grid pattern following sections lines (Figure 10). Both Collins Drive to the west and Ferry Drive to the east provide primary accesses to Lincoln Road, the most direct route to services.

There are other ways in and out of the planning area. Snowdrift Road provides access outside of the area to Hauser Dam Road to the east, but that route is not a direct or efficient enough route to be considered a primary access. Glass Drive could be used to access Lincoln Road, but again, the length of the road limits its efficiency and is therefore not considered a primary access.

Within the planning area, the north-south roads are Collins Drive and Ferry Drive. The east-west roads from north to south are Snowdrift Road, Tea Road and Fantasy Road (Figure 11).

Current Traffic Volume and Routes

Traffic counts for the roads within the planning area are not readily available. Traffic impact analyses for recent subdivisions within the planning area estimate traffic counts on the western part of Tea Road at 59 annual average daily trips (AADT), and for the western part of Fantasy Road at 20 AADT. Both of the studies estimate trips for Collins Drive between Wooten Road and Fantasy Road at 141 AADT, and on Collins Drive north of Lincoln Road at 308 ADT. The County measured AADT at 454 on Ferry Drive north of Lincoln Road in 2012 (Figure 12).

The estimated amount of existing traffic generated within the planning area is based on these assumptions:

- The typical land use is single-family rural residential, with some rural vacant parcels;
- The typical AADT generated by a single-family residence is 9.57 trips per day, while the rural vacant parcels are estimated to generate 0 AADT.

Based on these assumptions, with 27 parcels identified as rural residential, the planning area is estimated to generate 259 AADT.

The majority of traffic in and out of the planning area is likely split between Collins Drive and Ferry Drive based on the locations of residences. The parcels on the west half of the planning area are likely to use Collins Drive while the parcels on the east half are likely to use Ferry Drive. Based on these assumptions, homes in the planning area are likely to contribute approximately 115 AADT to Collins Drive and 145 AADT Ferry Drive.

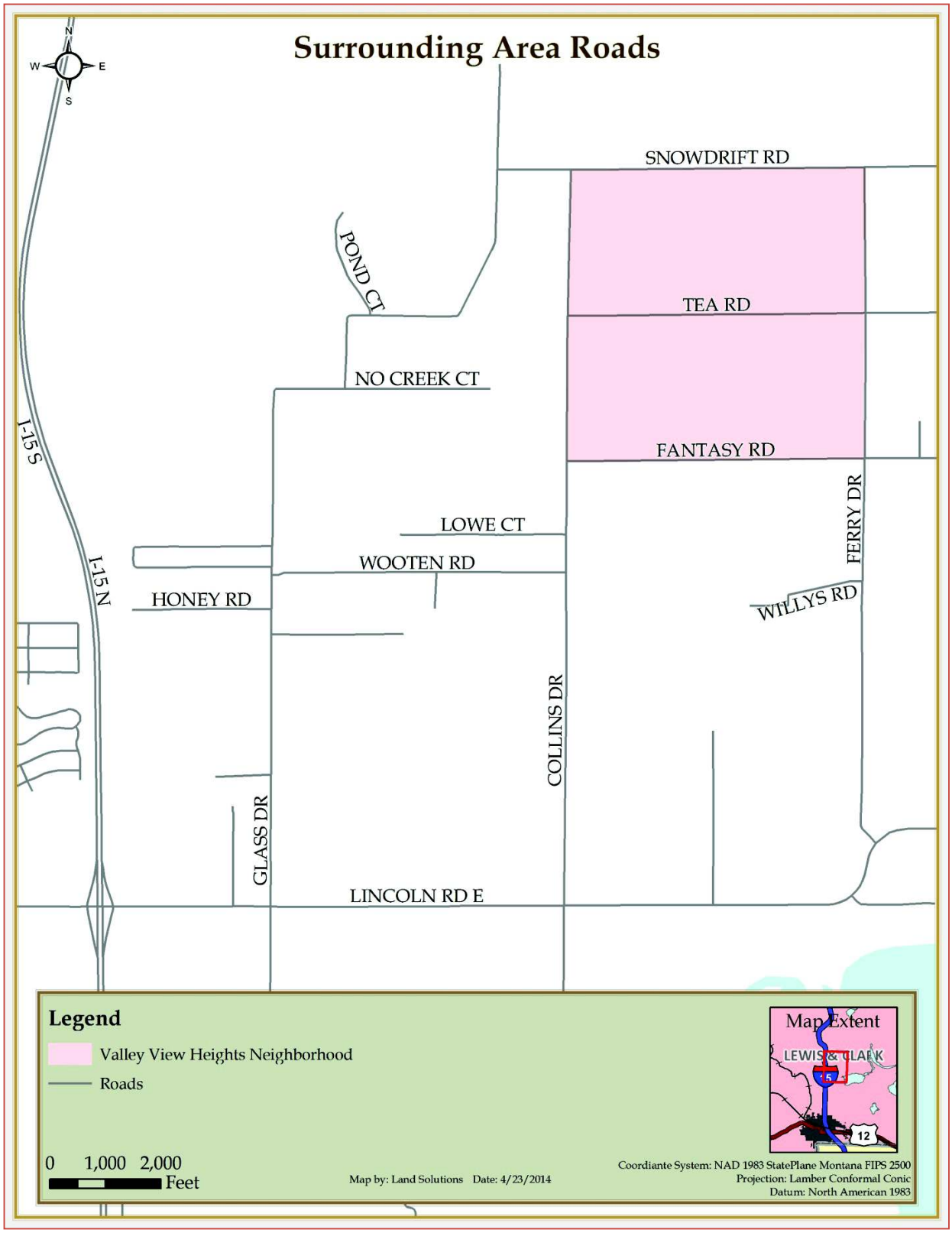


Figure 10: Road network surrounding the planning area

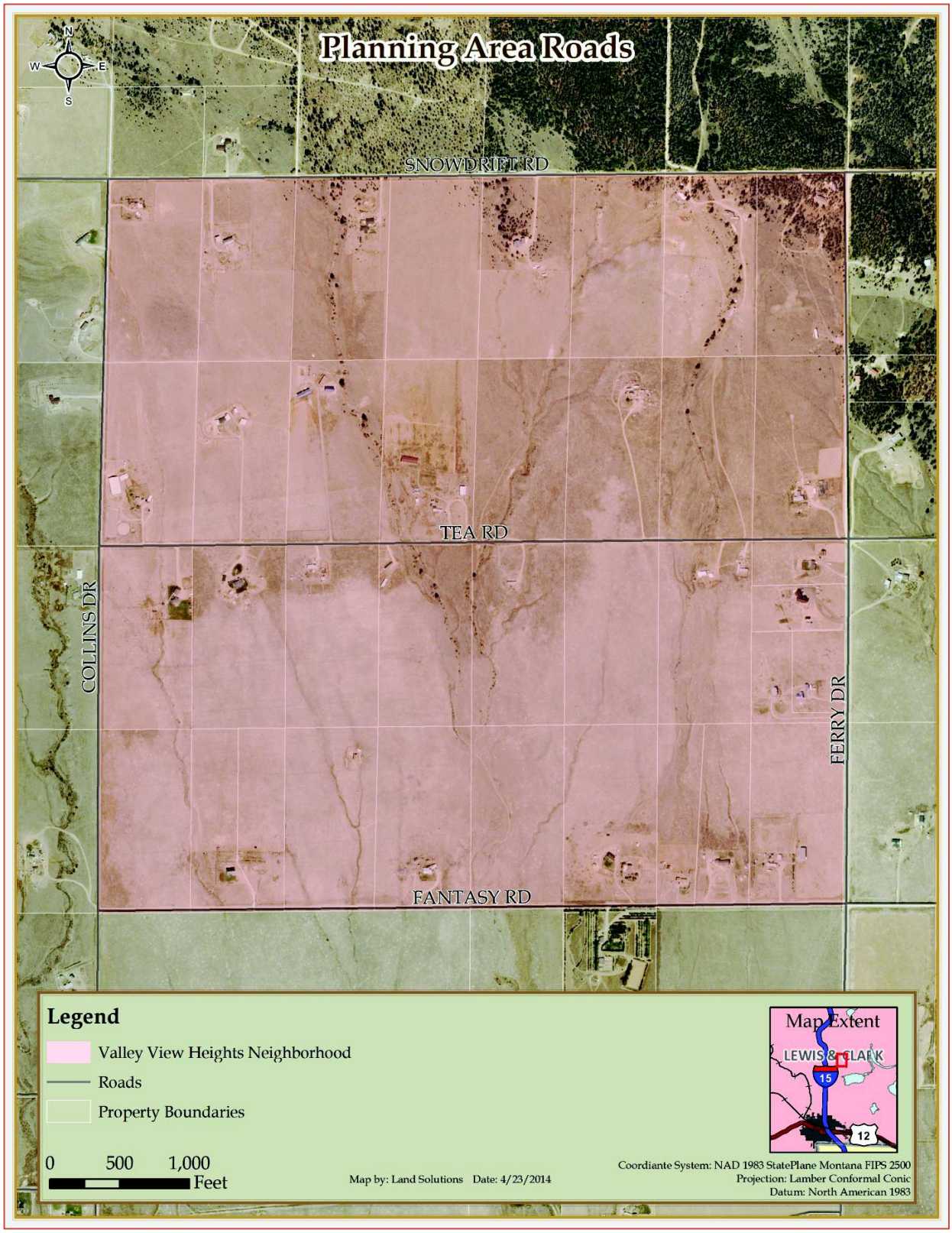


Figure 11: Road network within the planning area

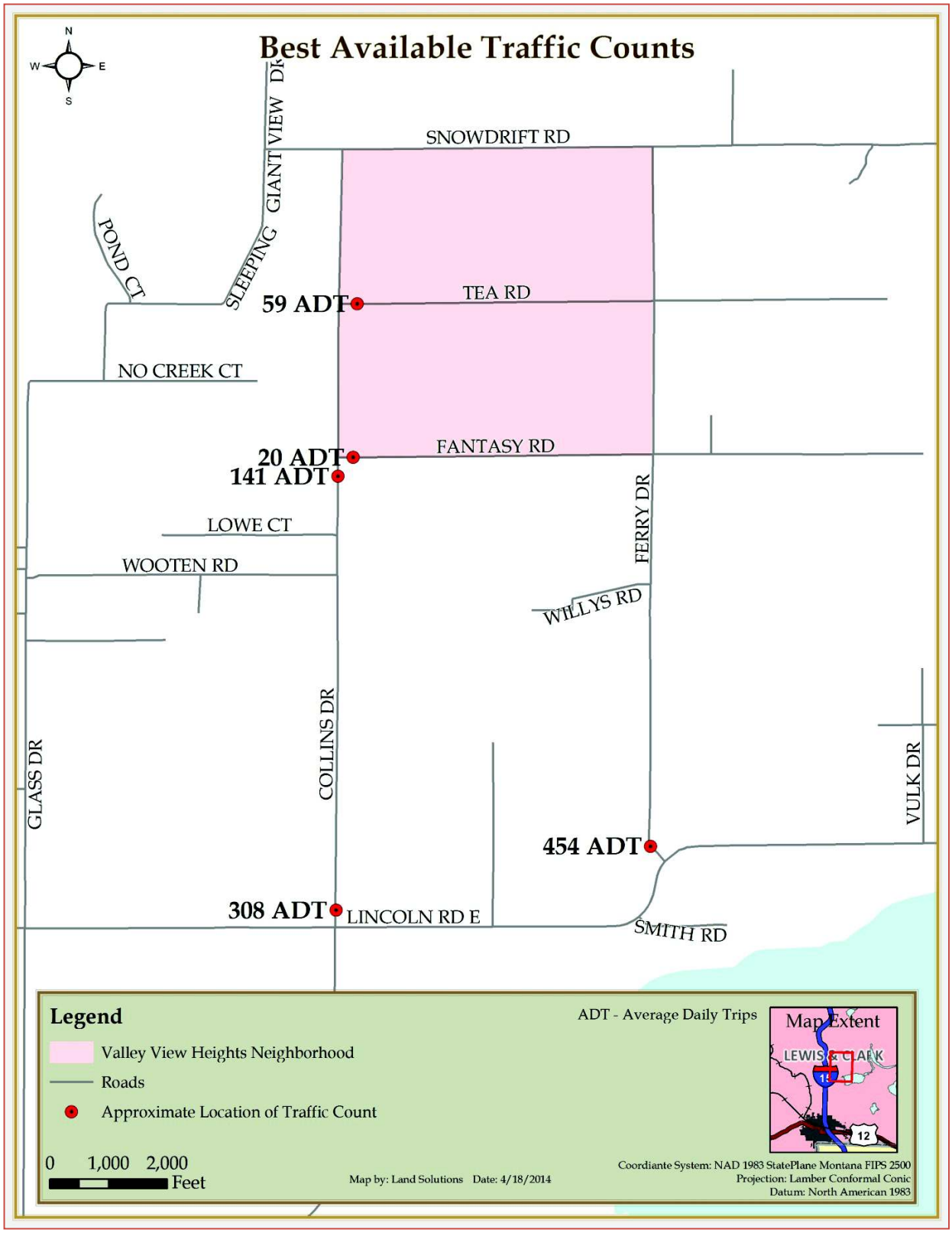


Figure 12: Best available traffic counts on travel routes to and within the planning area

Road Classifications

Roads within the planning area have been assigned road classifications based on the Lewis and Clark County Road Standards. Snowdrift Road, Tea Road and Fantasy Road would classify as a Local Road (Type 1). These roads are gravel surfaced roads designed for direct access to properties with total AADT less than 400. Collins Drive and Ferry Drive could be considered minor collector roads (Type 3). Despite the low traffic volumes and providing direct access to properties, Collins Drive and Ferry Drive also function as the primary network connecting the neighborhood to the arterial street system, which is the function of collector roads.

Road Conditions

Generally, based on visual observation the roads within the planning area are substandard, meaning they are not built to the Lewis and Clark County Road Standards. Collins Drive and Ferry Drive are at least 24 feet in width, but in most locations lack any crown, causing isolated locations where water pools and forms potholes and ruts. Fantasy Road is well below current road standards, as this road lacks a proper base and crown. Ponding, causing muddy stretches, potholes and ruts, is common. There are a few places where traffic has widened the road to avoid deep ruts and muddy ponds. In other places, the road is only 12 feet wide. Tea Road is in a similar, but not as poor, condition as Fantasy Road. Snowdrift Road is similar in width and condition to Collins Drive and Ferry Drive.

There are many deficiencies in the road network including substandard construction, widths, crowns, off-set intersections and multiple converging driveways. At low traffic volumes and low speeds, these deficiencies do not create significant impediments but as traffic increases and speeds increase, these deficiencies can create impediments. If maintenance stays at a similar level and traffic on these roads increases, road conditions will continue to deteriorate.

Road Maintenance

Both Collins Drive and Ferry Drive are regularly maintained by the County from Lincoln Road for approximately one mile to the north, but the County does not regularly maintain roads farther north. Part of the planning area is within the North Hills Rural Improvement District (RID), a Rural Improvement District formed to fund road maintenance (Figure 13). A RID is a special assessment included with property taxes to pay for a service. The RID includes parts of Snowdrift Road, Collins Drive, Tea Road, and Fantasy Road and pays for ongoing maintenance only. A group of representative landowners and Lewis and Clark County Public Works staff sets the maintenance priorities for the district.

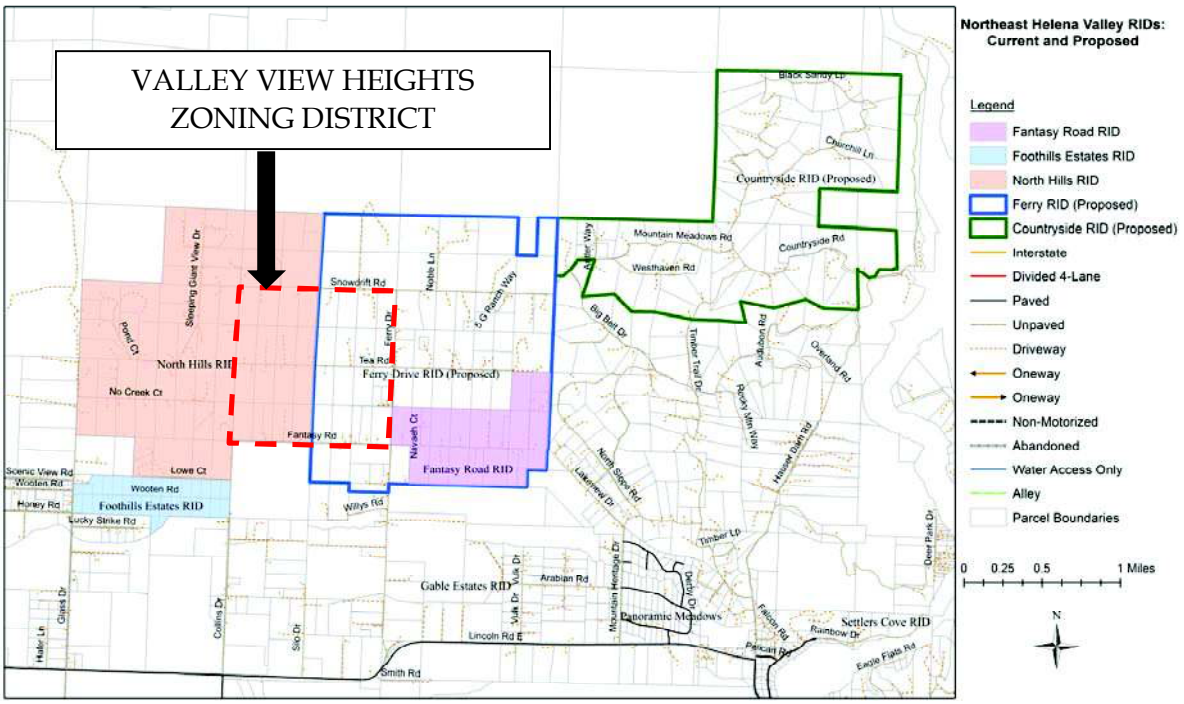


Figure 13: Rural Improvement Districts in the northeast portion of Helena Valley.

Water Quality Protection District

The planning area is within the Lewis and Clark County Water Quality Protection District. The District's mission is to preserve, protect and improve water quality. It is funded through a special assessment on property taxes. The district monitors water quality within the Helena Valley, and conducts education and outreach campaigns in order to promote behavior that protects water quality. The Water Quality Protection District is a potential source of information on groundwater quantity and quality in the study area.

Utilities

The planning area is served by overhead power, supplied by Northwestern Energy. Some power lines to individual homes have been placed underground. Telephone land line service is available, as is cellular service.

Emergency Services

Lewis and Clark County Disaster and Emergency Services has adopted a detailed County Emergency Operations Plan that directs response to major hazards such as floods, wildland fires and earthquakes. The planning area is included within this disaster response plan.

Law Enforcement

The planning area is within the jurisdiction of the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Department.

Fire Protection

The planning area is not located within a rural fire district; therefore, it is within the Lewis and Clark County Fire Service Area. The nearest fire stations are Station No. 1 of the Tri-Lakes Fire District which is approximately four miles away, and the West Valley Fire Station #2, located at the intersection of Valley View Road and Montana Avenue, approximately four and one-half road miles from the planning area. The nearest water source is located close to two miles from the planning area on Collins Drive. The source is capable of providing 500 gallons per minute. The source is maintained by the West Valley Fire District. The County has a Mutual Aid Agreement with the fire districts to provide service to the planning area. Two minor subdivisions recently approved within the study area have conditions of approval requiring installation of a water source for fire protection.

Medical Service

Medical services are provided primarily by St. Peters Hospital in Helena.

Education

The planning area is within the Helena School District #1. The School District is in the middle of a major planning effort and potential reorganization of its facilities. The current focus is on elementary schools. Jim Darcy is the nearest elementary school to the planning area. According to the school district, Jim Darcy's current enrolment is 330 students. The long term plans for elementary students is currently very fluid, as different proposals are presented to and debated by the public. Middle school and high school age students attend school in Helena. In planning studies it is common to assume a single-family residence generates 0.5 school aged children, or about 1 child for every two homes.

Agriculture

Based on site visits to the planning area, agricultural activity appears to be limited. Small farming operations such as raising eggs or specialty animals may be present, but larger farming or ranching operations are absent. The area is not irrigated, which is likely necessary for commercial crop production. According to the Web Soil Survey, an online service provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the soils with the planning area are not considered Prime Farmland or Prime Farmland if Irrigated. About 70% of the soils within the planning area are considered Farmland of Local Importance. According to the USDA, Farmlands of Local Importance are described as follows:

> *In some local areas, there is concern for certain additional farmlands for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops, even though these lands are not identified as having national or statewide importance. Where appropriate, these lands are to be identified by the local agency or agencies concerned. In places, additional farmlands of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance.*

Lewis & Clark County does not have a local ordinance regarding farmland, but subdivision regulations do require an assessment of potential impacts on agriculture and mitigation of any impacts that are identified.

PLANNING AREA LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS

Existing Land Use

An existing land use pattern within the planning area was established by reviewing information on the Montana Cadastral website, aerial photography taken in 2011 and field observation during March of 2014.

The Montana Cadastral System categorizes parcels for tax purposes based on use. According to the Montana Cadastral System, the two uses present in the planning area are Rural Residential and Rural Vacant Land. These records do have discrepancies compared to actual use, and to avoid errors cadastral information was cross-referenced with aerial photography and confirmed by a site visit. For purposes of this assessment, each parcel was examined by aerial photography first for a building, and if a building was present use was confirmed by presence of a driveway. Lack of a driveway would indicate a property is vacant. A site visit was then conducted to confirm observations of the aerial photography. Observations on the site visit were made only from the public right of way on the road.

Based on this analysis, two land use types have been identified in the planning area (Figure 14). They are:

- **Rural Residential**: This land use type indicates there is a residential structure on the property that is assumed to be occupied or habitable. This could include residences that are occupied part time.

- **Rural Vacant**: This land use type indicates there is no residential structure on the property or that the structure on the property is not habitable or appears not to have been inhabited for an extended period of time.

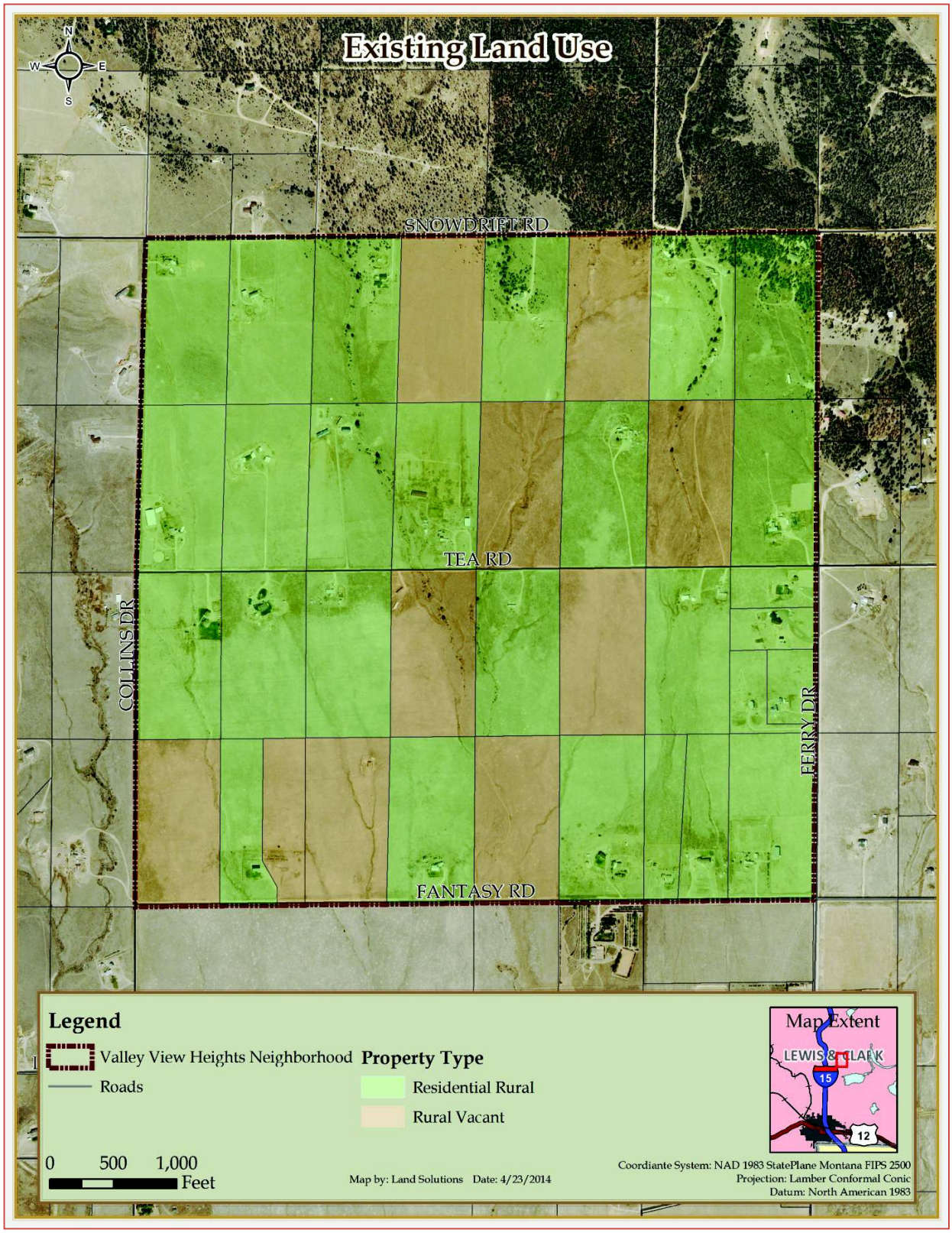


Figure 14: Existing land use designations within the planning area

Parcel Size

An evaluation of existing parcel sizes was completed using GIS. Parcel sizes fell neatly into three patterns: parcels that are just over five acres, parcels that are approximately 10 acres and parcels that are approximately 20 acres. There are 37 parcels within the planning area. Of the 37, four are approximately five acres, four are approximately 10 acres, and 29 are approximately 20 acres (Figure 15).

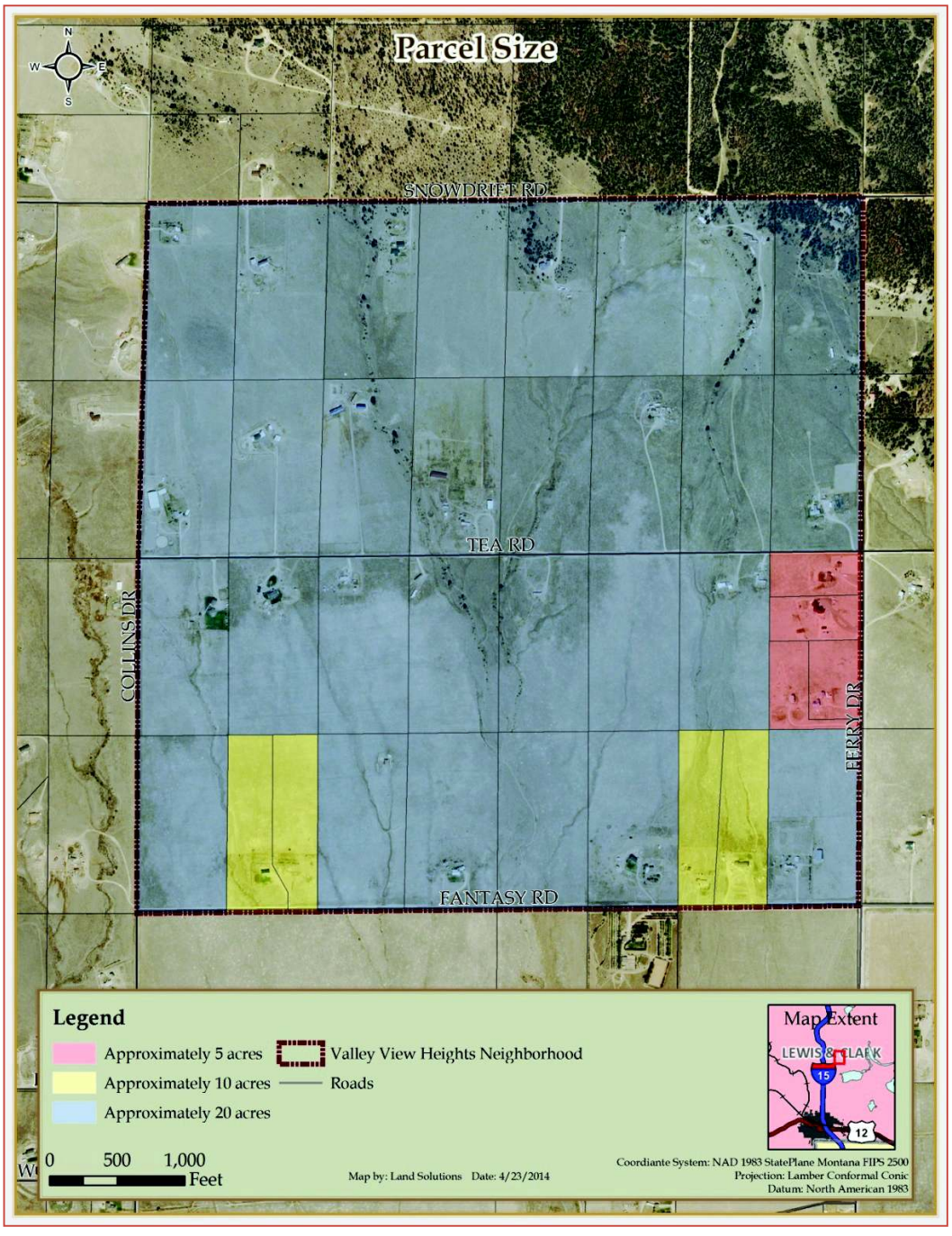


Figure 15: Parcel size in the planning area

Housing

Based on site visits to the area, it appears the predominate use of the parcels identified as Rural Residential is single-family. There are a number of structures which could be observed from the road that potentially could be guest houses or in-law type apartments, but there is no way to confirm the actual use or number of instances. Based on the assumption that the prevailing use in the planning area is single-family residential, there are 27 residences in the planning area.

Population

According to the U.S. Decennial Census, the planning area is within Census Tract Three of Lewis and Clark County. In Census Tract Three, the average household size is 2.32 persons per household. Based on these statistics and the assumption that the use of the residencies is single-family, the population of the planning area is approximately 63 people.

Entitlements

Entitlements are subdivisions that have preliminary plat approval but do not have final plat approval, so are not yet parcels of record that can be conveyed. Within the planning area two subdivisions have preliminary plat approval but not final plat approval. These are subdivisions on two 20-acre tracts, and will create four parcels each. This is a net increase of three parcels per subdivision for a total increase of six parcels in the planning area. When/if these parcels are created through final platting, the number of parcels and the density in the planning area will increase slightly.

Zoning

The planning area is not currently zoned. A zoning district boundary was enacted by the County Commissioners on January 28, 2014. The next step in establishing zoning regulations for the zoning boundary is to adopt a neighborhood plan/development pattern based on this Existing Conditions Analysis, other research, recommendations of the County Growth Policy, and public input (Sections 76-2-104 and 106, MCA). Upon adoption of the neighborhood plan/development pattern by the Planning and Zoning Commission, resolution(s) for zoning and land use regulations to implement the recommendations of the neighborhood plan/development pattern for the district will be prepared for consideration by the County Commissioners (Sections 76-2-107, MCA). The proposed zoning regulations could also be presented simultaneously with the neighborhood plan/development pattern to expedite the process.

CHAPTER 2 – BUILDOUT ANALYSIS

Growth projections allow exploration of what future conditions in a planning area could look like based on a set of assumptions. There are a number of commonly accepted statistical methods using U.S. Census data to project growth rates for larger populations, but the margin of error becomes much higher with smaller sample sizes. In a small planning area like this, there are some real challenges and uncertainty in projecting future growth based on population projections. In lieu of growth projections, a build out analysis is provided below to describe possible growth scenarios and potential impacts within the planning area.

Build Out Analysis

The purpose of the build out analysis is to develop a picture of the amount of development likely or possible in the planning area and to analyze potential impacts to resources, infrastructure and services.

Four different scenarios were explored in this build-out analysis. The first assumes a minimum lot size of 5 acres for each new house lot based on current covenants imposed on all of the existing lots. The second scenario assumes that the minimum lot size will be 20 acres, based on the petition filed for Part 1 zoning. The third scenario included in this build-out analysis assumes a minimum lot size of 10 acres, as recommended by the Helena Valley Area Plan based on the constraints of water availability, road conditions, and rural fire protection systems. The fourth scenario also follows a net density of one home per 10 acres, but it allows clustering of those homes on 5-acre lots to minimize the construction of new roads to access the building sites.

Scenario 1: 5-Acre Lot Density

This first build out scenario is based on the premise that the overall density of the planning area under current planning and regulatory programs would be one residential dwelling unit per approximately 5 acres at full build out. One residential unit per 5 acres was selected for three reasons: First, single family residential development is the predominant land use in the planning area. Second, three residential subdivisions with lots averaging 5 acres have been approved in the planning area. (One has been finalized and the other two have preliminary approval.) Third, there are protective covenants in the planning area limiting development to one single-family residence to 5 acres. Covenants are an agreement between property owners and not enforced by the County, so while covenants cannot always be relied upon as an effective land use management tool, in this case they serve as a basis for the analysis. It should be noted that the private covenants provide for removal of the 5-acre lot size restriction with consent of the property owners.

In this scenario, all of the planning area is divided into approximately five-acre parcels. There are currently 36 existing home sites or approved lots that could be developed into home sites. Laying out the total potential additional home sites requires providing road access and the minimum lot size for each new parcel. Figure 16 on the next page graphically portrays developing

all of the vacant parcels into subdivisions. Some assumptions have been made about existing lot use and access that reduces the maximum build out by about 10 lots.

Table 1 and Figure 16 show the potential impacts of Scenario 1.

Table 1: Comparison of potential impacts of full build out with 5-acre lots.

5-acre density scenario	Number of homes	Estimated AADT	New Roads to Maintain	Number of Wells & Septics	School Aged Children
Existing Homes and Approved Home Sites	36	345	2	36	18
Potential Added Home Sites (Vacant Parcels)	82	785	21	82	41
TOTAL	118	1129	23	118	59

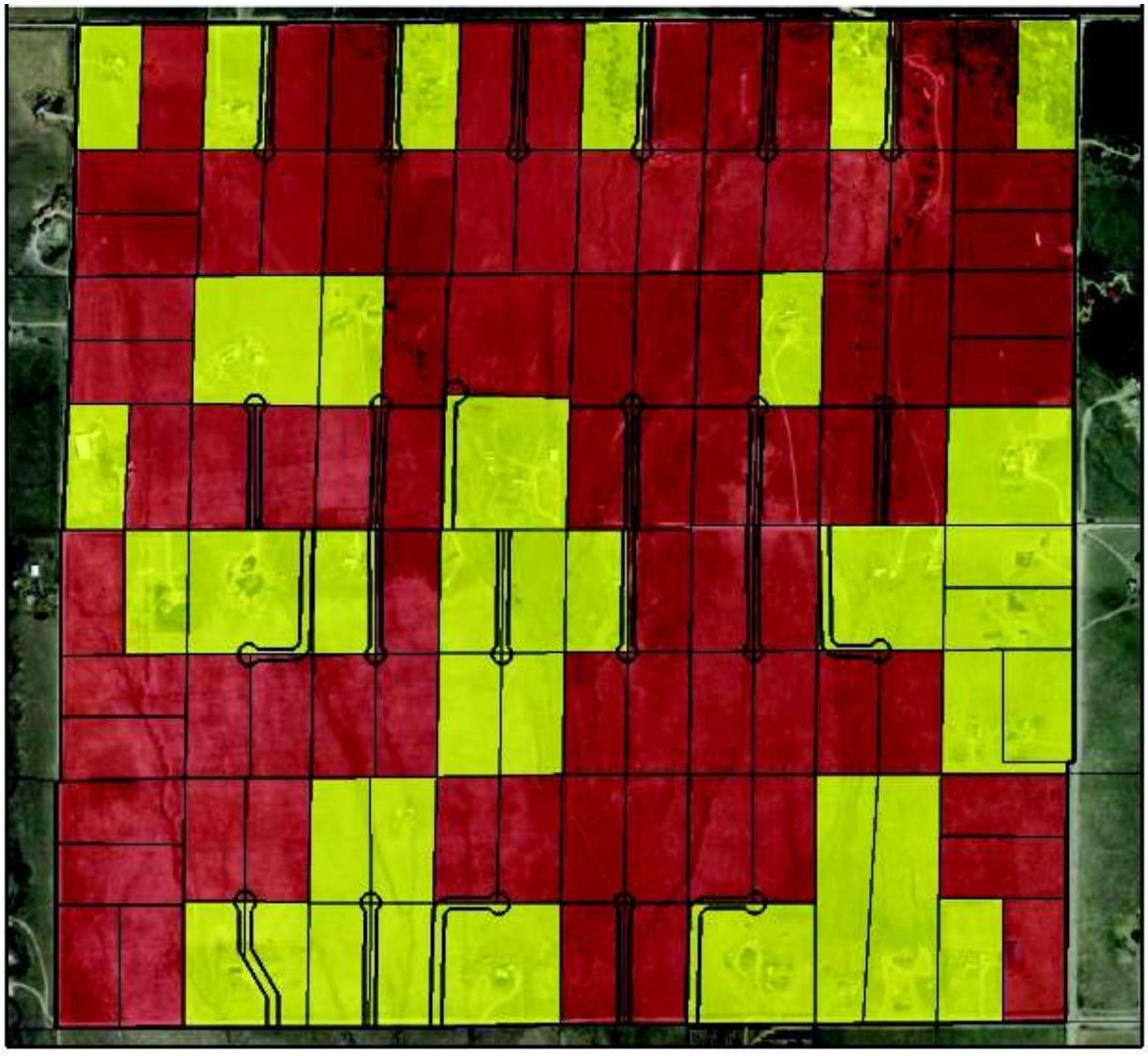


Figure 16: Scenario 1 - Build out analysis based on a minimum lot size of 5 acres (Yellow-existing home sites, Red-new home sites).

Scenario 2: 20-Acre Lot Density

This second build out scenario is based on the premise that the overall density of the planning area would be one residential dwelling unit per approximately twenty acres at full build out as requested by petitioners for the Valley View Heights Zoning District. Table 2 and Figure 17 show the potential impacts under Scenario 2.

Table 2: Comparison of potential impacts of full build out with 20-acre lots.

20-acre density scenario	Number of homes	Estimated AADT	New Roads to Maintain	Number of Wells & Septics	School Aged Children
Existing Homes and Approved Home Sites	36	345	2	36	18
Potential Added Home Sites (Vacant Parcels)	7	67	0	7	3 - 4
TOTAL	43	412	2	43	21 - 22

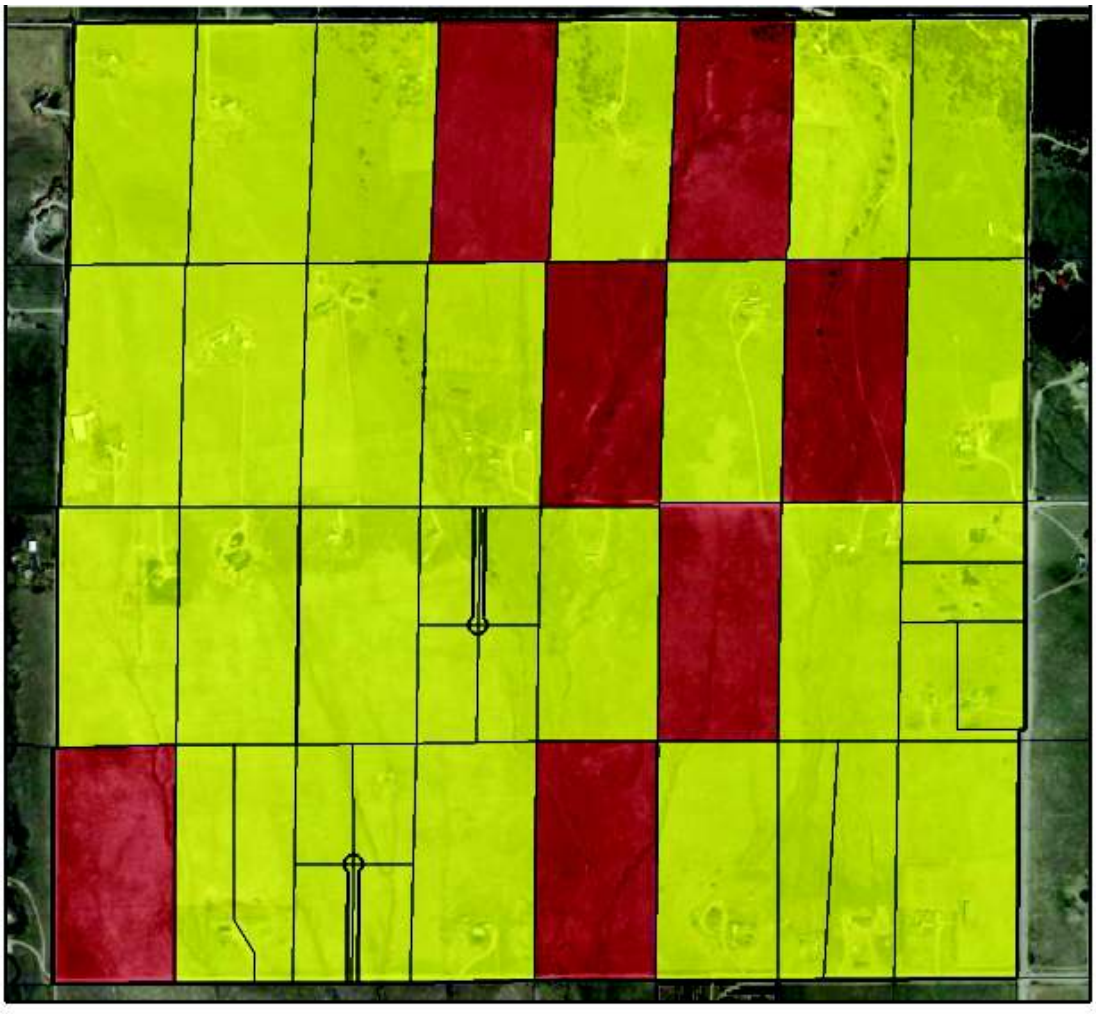


Figure 17: Scenario 2 - Build out analysis based on a minimum lot size of 20 acres (Yellow-existing home sites, Red-new home sites).

Scenario 3: 10-Acre Lot Density

This third build out scenario is based on the premise that the overall density of the planning area under the new growth management program for this area would be one residential dwelling unit per approximately ten acres at full build out as recommended in the Helena Valley Area Plan. Table 3 and Figure 18 show the potential impacts under Scenario 3.

Table 3: Comparison of potential impacts of full build out with 10-acre lots.

10-acre density scenario	Number of homes	Estimated AADT	New Roads to Maintain	Number of Wells & Septics	School Aged Children
Existing Homes and Approved Home Sites	36	345	2	36	18
Potential Added Home Sites (Vacant Parcels)	34	325	10	34	17
TOTAL	70	670	12	70	35

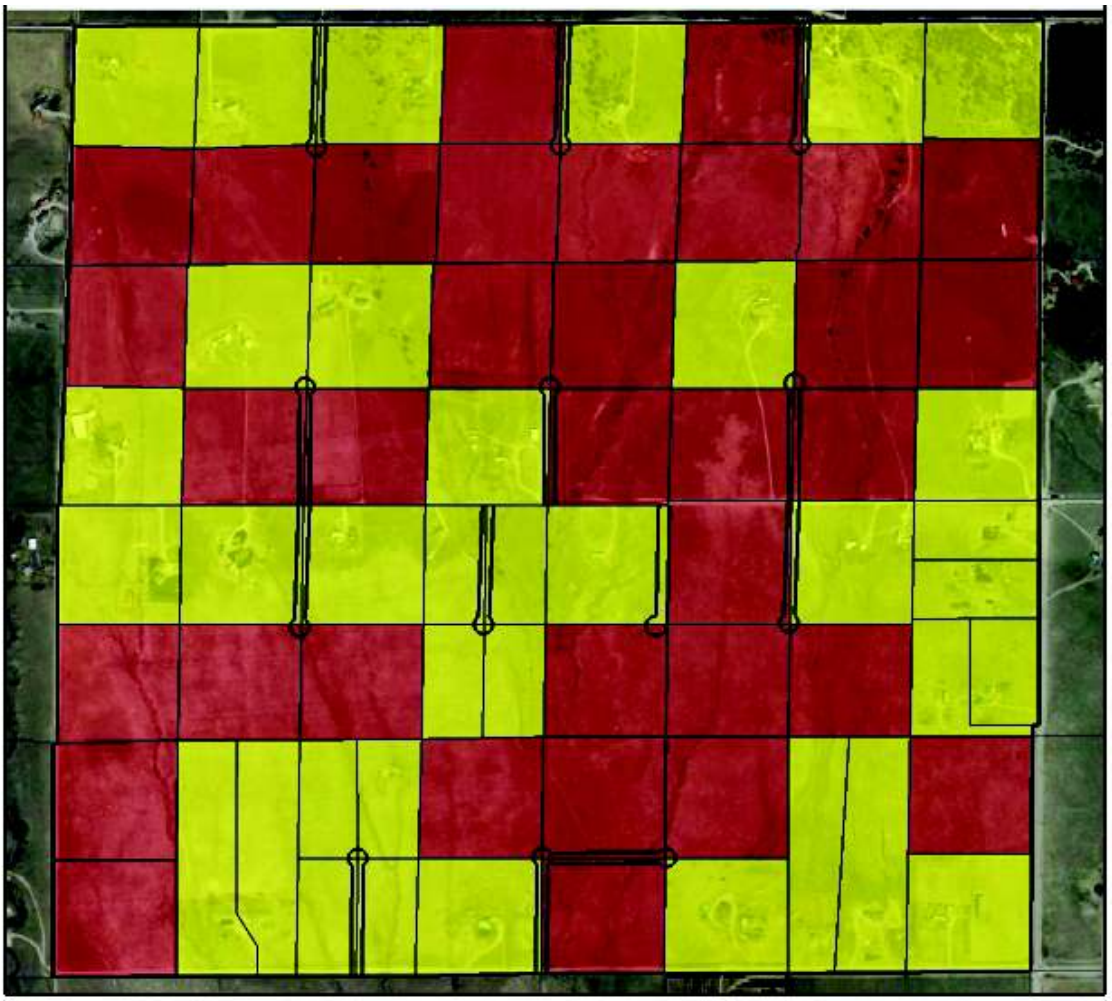


Figure 18: Scenario 3 - Build out analysis based on a minimum lot size of 10 acres (Yellow-existing home sites, Red-new home sites).

Scenario 4: 10-Acre Lot Density with Clustered Lots (5 acres)

This fourth build out scenario is also based on the premise that the overall density would be one residential dwelling unit per ten acres. To limit the number of roads needed to access new home sites, however, clustering allows new lots to be reduced in size to 5 acres, allowing most of those new lots to have their frontage on existing roads in the area. Table 4 and Figure 19 show the potential impacts under Scenario 4.

Table 4: Comparison of potential impacts of full build out with clustered 5-acre lots.

10-acre density scenario with cluster lots	Number of homes	Estimated AADT	New Roads to Maintain	Number of Wells & Septics	School Aged Children
Existing Homes and Approved Home Sites	36	345	2	36	18
Potential Added Home Sites (Vacant Parcels)	34	325	4	34	17
TOTAL	70	670	6	70	35

Figure 19: Scenario 4 - Build out analysis based on a minimum lot size of 10 acres (Yellow-existing home sites, Red-new home sites, Green–common open space).

Projected Impacts to Natural Resources and Infrastructure

Projected Impacts to Water Quantity and Quality

As the number of homes increases within the planning area, impacts to existing resources and infrastructure will occur. Because of the underlying geology, water quantity and quality are significant issues in this planning area. All of the homes are currently served by individual wells and septic systems. Due to the cost of developing and maintaining public (municipal type) water and sewer systems, development in the planning area will likely require individual wells and septic systems.

Based on recent studies conducted by the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology in the North Hills and the Scratchgravel Hills, water tables in tertiary and bedrock aquifers can be impacted by the density of wells. For example, in the North Hills, the water table is dropping in an area of dense concentration of community and private wells. In the Scratchgravel Hills, the overall density of the area is one unit per 10 acres, and no drawdown is occurring, but when modeling was done it indicated that higher destines could result in drawdown. Research by the Lewis and Clark Water Quality Protection District in one tertiary aquifer has concluded that an individual subdivision with one-acre lots has dropped the water table by 110 feet. The exact carrying capacity of the aquifer in the planning area is not known, but there is substantial evidence in similar areas that development can affect the depth of the water table, due either to cumulative water withdrawal, lack of aquifer recharge, or both.

With regard to water quality, again it is uncertain exactly what the impact might be, but there is reason to be cautious regarding the cumulative effects of full build out of the study area with septic systems overlying the aquifer, which contains bedrock in some areas that is not conducive to effective wastewater treatment. Soils in the area are thought to have moderate to severe limitations for on-site wastewater treatment systems due to poor filtering capacities, shallow soil depths, cobble and fast percolation rates. Specially designed treatment systems may be needed to address soil limitations.

Projected Impacts to Schools

At full build out under the highest density scenario, there could be an additional 50-60 school aged children within the planning area, which may require adjustments to bus routes. The Helena School District #1 is currently in a long range planning process to develop a facilities plan to accommodate projected demographic changes to the school age population. Lower development densities would decrease the impact on local schools.

Projected Impacts to Roads

To measure the potential impacts of new development in the planning area to roads, some assumptions must be made regarding how the roads will be used. Traffic is assumed to follow the shortest route to Lincoln Road because the vast majority of trips are expected to use Lincoln Road. Trips generated on the east half of the planning area are assumed to use Ferry Drive; trips generated on the west half of the planning area are assumed to use Collins Drive. The Lewis and Clark County Subdivision Regulations assume each existing single-family home generates 9.57 Average Annual Daily Trips (AADT).

The Lewis and Clark County Subdivision Regulations require subdividers to mitigate impacts to existing roads through a proportional share analysis based on court decisions that limit the authority of the County to require off-site road improvements. If a subdivision is proposed on a road that is built to appropriate design standards and can accommodate existing and added traffic volume, no off-site road improvements are required. If the access roads to the subdivision location do not meet County design standards, the developer must pay a proportional share for full reconstruction of all impacted road segments to County standards. No mechanism has been identified to generate the funds needed beyond the developer's proportional share of the improvements, which can be in the millions of dollars.

An independent engineering analysis that is a companion to this report (Valley View Heights Roadway Capital Improvements Study) indicates that the expected cost of improving the local roads within the proposed district to County gravel road standard is about $230,000 per mile. That same engineering analysis indicated that the expected cost of improving those local roads to a paved standard once vehicle trips exceed 400 AADT would be in the range of $1.3 million per mile. Given that the traffic on Fantasy Road, Tea Road, and Snowdrift Road will likely continue to split between Ferry Drive on the east on Collins Drive on the west, it is likely that no development would exceed the threshold of 400 AADT, and those roads could remain gravel even on full build out under Scenario 1 (5-acre lots).

The system currently in place for requiring those developing land through subdivisions is based on the assumption that every road where a subdivision is proposed will eventually be improved to a new County Road construction standard. The 2014 Greater Helena Area Long Range Transportation Plan contains estimates for how much it will cost to address safety and capacity issues for the County Road Network, the regional roads that are the responsibility of the County, as opposed to the State of Montana or the cities of Helena and East Helena.

The regional long range transportation plan for the first time has acknowledged the lack of funding for upgrading and maintaining the County Road Network:

> "It is very clear that the transportation system needs in the LRTP [Long Range Transportation Plan] planning area are grossly underfunded. Two categories of projects were developed to classify major transportation network needs. The MSN [Major System Network] projects are those projects that are currently within the County's jurisdictional authority and clearly will need improvement just to mitigate existing impacts. Roadways such as Country Club Avenue, Williams Street, Lincoln Road, etc., will need modifications and will hopefully be candidates for traditional funding sources available for transportation projects.
>
> The CRN [County Road Network] projects, however, are those that are lower volume, more local in nature with limited funding and may therefore require innovative funding strategies (such as bonding programs, special assessments, etc.). This latter concept is currently being explored in the Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy Update, along with other potential policies to better manage growth."

The 2014 Greater Helena Long Range Transportation Plan estimates the unfunded liability for improving the Major System Network of roads to address past traffic increases and to accom-

modate future growth in Helena Valley at $178 million. The Plan estimates the unfunded liability of the County Road Network at $77 million. These "grossly underfunded" transportation needs require that different approaches to growth management be explored that limit growth in traffic on substandard roads in Helena Valley like those in the Valley View Heights zoning district.

Projected Impacts to Fire Protection Resources

As densities within the planning area increase, the ability of fire services to protect property becomes more complicated. The primary concern is water availability. The Lewis and Clark County Subdivision Regulations require new subdivisions to consider the impacts to fire services, and sometimes require water supply such as storage tanks or wells dedicated to fire service equipment. From the appendix K of the subdivision regulations:

Fire protection options for new subdivisions are grouped into two categories, Class I and Class II. Each of these has a variety of options regarding water supply the applicant may select from to meet the minimum requirements. The determination of whether class I or II requirements apply is based on density, the number of lots created in the final plat, and whether or not the development is set back at least 15 feet from all property lines… In the event that the property is located in a zoning district that requires a setback of greater than 15 feet, the larger setback shall apply.

As subdivisions occur within the planning area, they will need to meet the requirements for fire protection. Given the current parcel sizes and land ownership pattern, it is assumed most of the subdivisions will be less than 20 lots and qualify as a Class II subdivision. Each subdivision will need to include a water system or use an existing system off site. The end result would be a number of smaller systems designed to accommodate 250 gallons per minute for two hours, or a larger system which would be shared by subdivisions within the planning area.

Currently, the nearest water source to the area is about two miles away. If a subdivision does build a water supply system within the planning area, the nearest source would be closer than it currently is. However, the small size of the water source would limit its ability to serve the entire planning area.

CHAPTER 3 – CONSISTENCY WITH GROWTH POLICY

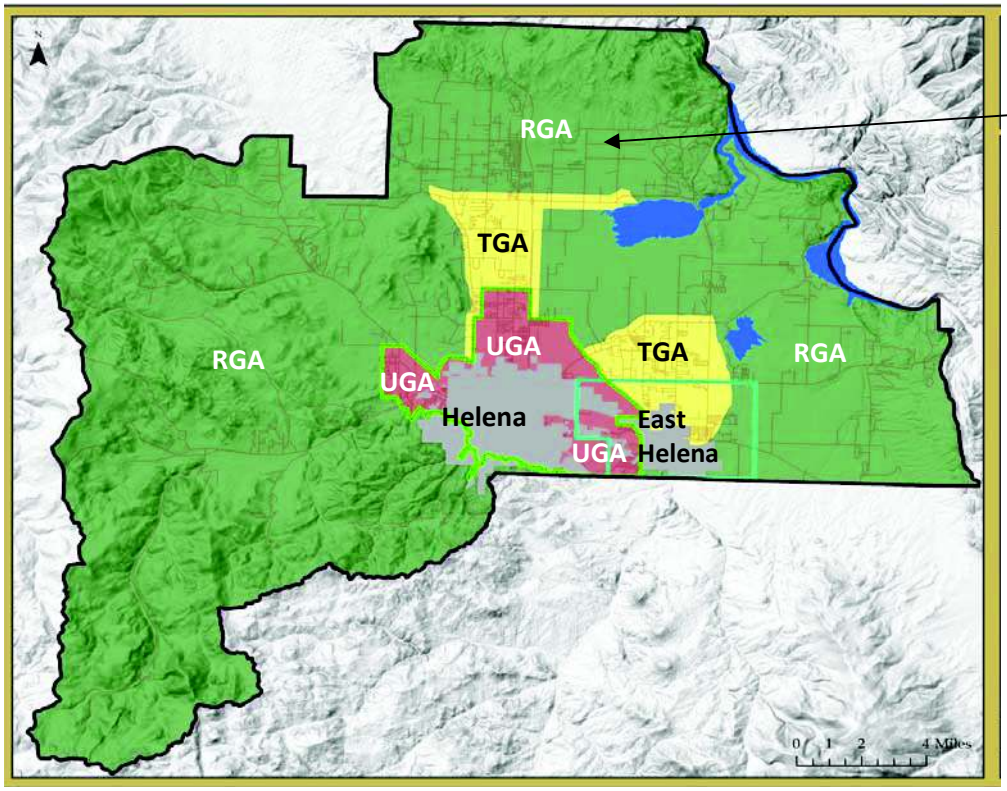
According to the Section 76-1-601(4)(a), MCA, neighborhood plans must be consistent with the County Growth Policy. The first step to ensure a neighborhood plan is consistent is to review the Growth Policy to identify the important issues relevant to the planning area based on existing conditions.

On March 3, 2016, the County Commissioners adopted an update to the 2004 County Growth Policy. That update consisted of two volumes. Volume 1 is the *Key Issues Report*. The *Key Issues Report* identified five constraints to development in Helena Valley:

1. Availability of water;
2. Wastewater disposal limitations;
3. Road conditions;
4. Rural fire protection systems; and,
5. Flooding.

Of these five constraints, water availability, road conditions, and rural fire protection systems are clearly limitations that must be addressed in any neighborhood plan for the Valley View Heights planning area and subsequent regulatory programs to implement that plan.

Volume 2 of the 2015 Growth Policy update is the Helena Valley Area Plan, which contains the policy recommendations to address the constraints to development. The Helena Valley Area Plan sets out three growth management areas as presented in Figure 20.



Valley View Heights Planning Area

Figure 20 – Helena Valley Area Plan Growth Management Areas

UGA – Urban Growth Area

RGA – Rural Growth Area

TGA – Transitional Growth Area

The Valley View Heights zoning district and planning area is located in a Rural Growth Area. The goals for Rural Growth Areas are as follows:

1. Limit development densities per the constraints of water availability, road conditions, and rural fire protection.
2. Adopt rural design standards that reflect and work for the reduced development densities.
3. Develop public-private partnerships to improve roads and fire protection.
4. Provide flexibility with expedited cluster subdivision reviews and Planned Unit Developments that address the development constraints.

The most applicable policy recommendations to accomplish these goals are provided in tables in Chapter 6 of the Helena Valley Area Plan:

Rural Growth Area Infrastructure Improvement Policies

Policy 1.1—Develop a set of rural road standards and road improvement requirements.

Policy 1.2—Develop public-private partnerships to improve rural roads.

Policy 2.1—Develop a plan for regional water sources for fire protection.

Rural Growth Area Density Controls

Policy 1.1—Adopt zoning that only limits development density.

Rural Growth Area Improved Performance Standards

Policy 1.1—Provide a cluster mechanism for rural subdivisions that will offer exemption from the requirements for environmental assessments, reviews for impacts on resources and services, and parkland dedication.

Policy 1.2—Adopt design standards to address impacts on resources and services.

Policy 1.3—Adopt a rural road level of service for access roads.

Policy 1.7—Overhaul the existing Part 1 zoning districts to make them consistent with the Growth Policy and efficient to administer, and/or convert them to Part 2 zoning.

Rural Growth Area Education and Outreach

Policy 2.1—Work with the Lewis and Clark Rural Fire Council to integrate the rural growth management program with regional fire protection efforts.

Any neighborhood plan and zoning regulations adopted for the Valley View Heights zoning district must be consistent with these policies. An assessment of consistency and a basis for the proposed development pattern is presented in Chapter 5 of this report.

CHAPTER 4 – PUBLIC INPUT

Stated Intent of Valley View Heights Petitioners

Proposed Statement of Intent: The purposes of this District are to accommodate and protect the use of low-density, single-family dwelling units and associated agricultural land uses, to promote groundwater protection and conservation, and preserve the rural residential atmosphere of the area, while enhancing the aesthetic character, public health, safety, and welfare, and property values of the area.

Proposed Permitted Uses: The proposed permitted uses include only single-family homes on 20-acre minimum lot sizes, with only one such home constructed or placed on each lot, associated agricultural pursuits, and accessory uses necessary to the use, operation, and maintenance of the permitted uses, such as, but not limited to, the following: private garages, corrals, barns, stables, and/or other similar necessary structures.

Public Input from Neighborhood Meeting

A public information meeting was held on April 18, 2016 to present the research contained in this report and to solicit public comments on the considerations and goals for creating a development pattern and zoning ordinance for the Valley View Heights Zoning District. The areas of discussion and comments taken from members of the public were as follows:

Roads

- Road condition not close to meeting County Standards (no gravel on these "gravel" roads)
- Maintenance concerns, as no roads are maintained, except Collins Drive
- Unhappy with Collins Drive maintenance in area
- RID a possibility for maintenance
- A lot of traffic from non-residents
- Want others in County contributing to maintenance costs, especially BLM
- Roads would be in better condition without access to BLM lands

Water Quantity

- Independent, non-published study completed by two DEQ hydrologists, found that hydrology in area only allows for 100-acre minimum lot sizes
- Study presented at Controlled Groundwater meeting and provided to DNRC
- Some residents have adequate water availability, but not abundant amounts; while others have fewer gallons per minute (depends upon location of well)
- Well depths of 300-400 feet in some areas
- Community water system discussion

Water Quality

- Wastewater treatment an issue

Minimum Lot Size

- Petitioners, and most in attendance at meeting, want 20-acre minimum lot sizes
- Some petitioners initially bought property with idea of subdividing, but changed their minds based on water availability
- The Uticks established the 5-acre minimum lot size based on water availability
- Some want ability to divide property into 5 acres for family members
- Most in attendance believe the slide showing 5-acre minimum lot size development is not a possibility, as water availability is either not there and/or not sustainable

Permitted Uses

- Petitioners would like the uses proposed and submitted by them in 2013-2014 to be applied to new zoning regulations
- Concerns about junkyards, etc.

Rural Growth Area Infrastructure Improvement Policies

Infrastructure Policy 1.1—Develop a set of rural road standards and road improvement requirements.

The current Subdivision Regulations require that projects in rural areas meet the same design standards as suburban and urban locations. A study completed by Great West Engineering for the Valley View Heights planning area (Valley View Heights Roadway Capital Improvement Study, December 2014) found that the cost of improving existing gravel roads to the County design standard for paved roads costs about $1.3 million dollars per mile. An alternative improvement program based on ride quality, safety, and maintenance improvements for gravel roads costs only $227,000 per mile, a million dollars per mile less than bringing the road up to County paved road standard and adequate for the proposed low-density development of the Rural Growth Areas.

Keeping the roads in the Valley View Heights planning area in a gravel condition to avoid the unachievable result of reconstruction to paved standards requires that density be limited in the planning area. The buildout analysis contained in Chapter 2 of this Neighborhood Plan indicate that with limitations on density, the possibility of cost-effective improvements based on gravel road standards is achievable and should be pursued.

Infrastructure Policy 1.2—Develop public-private partnerships to improve rural roads.

Because the County lacks funding for maintenance of the existing road network, all new roads built in subdivisions are required to be maintained by a Rural Improvement District (RID) established at the time of final platting of the subdivision. Tax assessments are collected on the properties in the subdivision, and the funds are used by the Public Works Department to contract out maintenance of the roads. Those funds can only be used for the specific roads within the RID.

In rural areas, the County's limited road maintenance budget is focused on roads that carry higher traffic levels, sometimes called the "everybody roads." Rural Improvement Districts, however, can be formed by property owners that desire road improvements outside of subdivisions that can't be funded by the County. Those same roads often provide access to proposed subdivision locations. When a subdivision is proposed, a public-private partnership could also be proposed that would have the developer, existing property owners, and the County form an RID for off-site road improvements that would spread the costs and provide opportunity for road improvements that would not otherwise be funded.

Two such opportunities are currently being pursued in the Valley View Heights planning area. The developer of a 4-lot subdivision on Fantasy Road is improving the road from its intersection with Collins Drive for a distance of about 2000 feet to the subdivision entrance. The road

will be improved to the County gravel road standard as indicated in the Valley View Heights road improvement study.

At the same time, an effort is underway to create a new RID or reorganize existing ones to do similar improvements to Collins Drive. Once Collins Drive is improved to the point that it becomes cost-effective to maintain, the County Public Works staff would consider taking over long-term maintenance of that sub-collector road that serves multiple secondary roads in the area, making it an "everybody road" that warrants County maintenance.

The Valley View Heights Neighborhood Plan and Development Pattern should continue and expand these public-private partnership efforts for improvement of the gravel road network.

Infrastructure Policy 2.1—Develop a plan for regional water sources for fire protection.

The current Subdivision Regulations attempt to make up for the lack of appropriate zoning and infrastructure investment with standards intended to respond to impacts of suburban and urban development. Thus the developer of a small subdivision in a rural area like Valley View Heights must install a water supply in the subdivision, usually in the form of an underground storage tank, that supplies two hours of water for firefighting purposes. Such systems, depending on the size of the subdivision, range in cost between $50,000 and $100,000. Because of this high cost, the regulations allow a developer to take advantage of any water source within a mile of the project. Therefore, multiple subdivisions of suburban density housing are being built with a few such tanks installed. And the locations of the limited water supply sources aren't planned as to any regional benefits they might provide. They simply go in where a particular landowner decides to sell land and where a developer decides to buy it to build houses to sell.

Another negative of the current system is that a project with no water supply source within a mile of the project must pay the full costs of a water system, while a developer and the home buyers in a subsequent nearby subdivision pay nothing as do other home owners in the area that benefit from the new water source. The Subdivision Regulations do include a recapture provision that theoretically reimburses developers who install expensive water supply systems, but this provision has never been used and it is unclear who would be eligible for the refund; the developer who sold all the lots, the original lot purchasers, or the current lot owners. Such a system might work with short time frames and large subdivisions, but it doesn't work well with small subdivisions scattered over the landscape years or even decades apart.

In addition to limiting development densities in rural areas that lack water and firefighting personnel to protect suburban development, the Helena Valley Area Plan recommends that the County work with local Fire Districts to plan a regional water supply network of strategically located sources using existing tanks and water bodies along with new water sources that can be developed with funding spread over all benefitting property owners through district assessments. Such a regional approach to providing water supplies for firefighting would provide better service and equitable funding of the facilities needed to support rural development.

A new water supply system being installed by the developers of two small subdivisions in Valley View Heights provides opportunity for the local Fire District to work with those developers and area residents to improve water supply for fire protection in the planning area.

Rural Growth Area Density Controls

Density Control Policy 1.1—Adopt zoning that only limits development density.

The basis for enacting new growth management measures for the Helena Valley Planning Area is to ensure that urban and suburban densities do not occur in areas constrained by water availability, road conditions, and rural fire protection systems. In areas with low-density development, concerns over conflicts between land uses are minimized. To provide maximum flexibility to property owners and minimize administrative burdens, developing a zoning ordinance for Rural Growth Areas that only controls development density through minimum lot sizes would be appropriate. Based on the recommendations of the Helena Valley Area Plan for Rural Growth Areas and the area characteristics and buildout analysis, a minimum lot size of 10 acres per single family dwelling is appropriate.

The Valley View Heights zoning district was initiated under a citizen petition per the provisions of Section 76-2-101, MCA, otherwise known as "Part 1" zoning. Section 76-2-104, MCA requires that the development pattern for a Part 1 zoning district contain recommendations for development of the district(s) "within some of which it shall be lawful and within others of which it shall be unlawful to erect, construct, alter, or maintain certain buildings to carry on certain trades, industries, or callings or within which the height and bulk of future buildings and the area of the yards, courts, and other open spaces and the future uses of the land or buildings shall be limited and future building setback lines shall be established." County Legal staff has advised that under the statute, any zoning promulgated under Part 1 must include limitations on land uses and spatial standards consistent with the provisions for Part 1 zoning.

The administrative goals for consistent zoning and cost-effective administration of the Valley View Heights zoning district could be achieved by initially enacting Part 1 zoning and then converting it to Part 2 zoning at a future point when the Rural Growth Area Part 2 zoning is enacted (which does not require regulation of uses). The other alternative would be to dissolve the Valley View Heights Zoning District per the provisions of Section 76-2-107(2), MCA, and include the Valley View Heights planning area in the surrounding Rural Growth Area zoning program.

Rural Growth Area Improved Performance Standards

Performance Standards Policy 1.1—Provide a cluster mechanism for rural subdivisions that will offer exemption from the requirements for environmental assessments, reviews for impacts on resources and services, and parkland dedication.

As with the exemptions allowed for urban development that follows an infrastructure plan, the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act provides exemptions from some of the subdivision review requirements for cluster subdivisions.

Adopting a minimum lot size of 10 acres in Rural Growth Management Areas will address density concerns for the development constraints of water availability, road conditions, and rural fire protection. In order to achieve maximum density, however, a land owner or developer will need to spread the development over larger areas and provide road access to serve the larger,

scattered lots. A cluster development provision would allow the same number of lots on a small portion of a land tract. This would reduce the amount of road needed to serve the lots and also preserve a majority of the land as open space while limiting overall development density to address the development constraints (See Buildout Scenario 4 on Page 30).

An added benefit is that such cluster subdivisions could be provided exemptions from the subdivision requirements for environmental assessments and reviews for impacts on resources and services, offering the same benefit of less expensive, expedited project reviews to developers in rural areas as will be offered to those in urban areas.

Under Section 76-3-103(2), MCA, in order to qualify for expedited reviews, cluster subdivision must include five or more lots. With the proposed limitations establishing a density of one home per 10 acres, the existing pattern of 20-acre lots could not achieve cluster development with five or more lots unless several of the existing lots were aggregated. Section 76-3-509, MCA requires that open space be created in any cluster development and that the open space be protected through irrevocable covenants, which could be another disincentive for clustering.

The goal of the Valley View Heights development pattern is not creation of permanent open space. The goal is to limit development density in keeping with the limitations of water availability, road conditions, and rural fire protection systems as well as maintaining the semi-rural character of the area and agricultural uses. Therefore, the limitations of the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act on the minimum number of lots involved in a cluster subdivision and the requirement for permanent restrictions on the open space are unwarranted and will make it difficult or impossible to achieve the benefits of clustered development. It is permissible to adopt Part 1 or Part 2 zoning that has less than five clustered lots and has revocable covenants on open space as long as full subdivision reviews are conducted and parkland is provided as per requirements of the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act. The Helena Valley Area Plan recognizes that conditions could change in the distant future and flexibility should be provided for appropriate responses to those changed conditions.

Performance Standards Policy 1.2—Adopt design standards to address impacts on resources and services.

The Helena Valley Area Plan recommends adoption of cluster development standards to provide flexibility to landowners and developers and to minimize construction of new infrastructure, especially roads needed to service new development. At the same time, both the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act and the County Growth Policy require that development occur in a manner that has the least impacts on community resources such as sensitive natural areas and wildlife habitat. Evaluation criteria and performance standards should be developed and implemented to guide cluster developments to those portions of a development site that will have the least impact on resources.

As those criteria and standards are implemented, they should be added to whatever zoning is applied to the Valley View Heights planning area. Doing so would provide significant relief to landowners, developers, and administrative staff, as it would enable first minor subdivisions to be exempt from the primary review criteria of Section 76-3-608, MCA, which requires a person splitting off even a single lot to hire a consultant to prepare a lengthy and expensive report ex-

ploring the potential impacts of that one lot on agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, the natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety. The limited potential of a small subdivision to have impacts under these criteria can be much more effectively addressed by zoning standards and approval conditions than by complicated studies.

Performance Standards Policy 1.3—Adopt a rural road level of service for access roads.

As previously stated, the current subdivision regulations treat all development as if it is intended for suburban densities. The proposed development pattern for Valley View Heights anticipates low-density, rural development that shouldn't require infrastructure more suited to higher-density, suburban areas. In particular, under either a standard development layout pursued under Buildout Scenario 3 with 10-acre lots (Page 29) or Buildout Scenario 4 (Page 30) with clustered, 5-acre lots, access to the "back lots" shouldn't require the construction of roads suitable for larger subdivisions. Narrower individual or common driveways would be adequate to serve those lots provided that a suitable turn around is provided for emergency vehicles.

Performance Standards Policy 1.7—Overhaul the existing Part 1 zoning districts to make them consistent with the Growth Policy and efficient to administer, and/or convert them to Part 2 zoning.

The Valley View Heights Zoning District was initiated by area residents concerned with the lack of adequate development controls to address the limitations of roads, water availability, and fire protection services in the planning area. Since that petition was acted on by the County Commissioners, a new Growth Policy and Helena Valley Area Plan have been adopted with clear direction to address those issues with an effective growth management program. Rather than continuing the historical establishment of scattered, inconsistent, and inefficient Part 1 zoning districts, the County is committed to adopting comprehensive zoning under the Part 2 statutes that is tied to the larger area plan. The Valley View Heights Zoning District boundary has been legally established, and unless it is dissolved by the County Commissioners under Section 76-2-108 (c), MCA, Part 1 zoning district standards must be applied. Upon adoption of the Part 2, Rural Growth Area zoning, however, this Part 1 district can and should be overhauled along with the other existing Part 1 districts in Helena Valley.

Rural Growth Area Education and Outreach

Education & Outreach Policy 2.1—Work with the Lewis and Clark Rural Fire Council and the Tri-County Working Group to integrate the rural growth management program with regional fire protection efforts.

As indicated in the existing conditions section of this report, the nearest fire stations for the Valley View Heights neighborhood are located four miles or greater distance. The nearest source of water for firefighting purposes is nearly two miles away. These services are inadequate for full and effective protection of the existing neighborhood, much less able to support full buildout under any of the four development scenarios.

The current subdivision regulations of the County require that every subdivision, whether it is one new lot or one hundred, provide an on-site source of water for fire protection unless there is an existing one within a mile of the proposal. This requirement cannot be met effectively by an individual landowner wanting to split off one lot or for a developer trying to achieve the maximum density allowed under current covenants, which allow four lots for each 20-acre parcel.

It would seem to be in the best interests of landowners, developers, and the fire service area to come up with a more comprehensive plan for fire protection water supplies than the current unplanned process.